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**A Critical Evaluation of Fr Aleksandr Vladimirovich Men's
Approach to the Religions of the World,
in the Light of the Declaration *Dominus Iesus***

Artūras Lukaševičius
B.A., Engineering; B.A., Theology;
M.A., Theology and Christian Ministry

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Open University for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy:
Ph.D., Theology and Religious Studies

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a critical analysis of the work of Fr Aleksandr Men', a prominent Orthodox writer and thinker. It is based on extensive primary and secondary source material in Russian as well as English. The analysis focuses on Men''s view of the religions of the world, which is examined in the light of the Catholic Declaration *Dominus Iesus*.

Part One, 'Preparing the Way for an Evaluation', starts with an overview of Men''s life and work in chapter 1. Chapter 2 reviews his writings on the world's religions, with a special focus on Men''s six-volume history of religions, *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life*. Chapter 3 introduces the Declaration *Dominus Iesus* by explaining its historical and theological context, as well as its nature and contents. The chapter ends by establishing the theological links between *Dominus Iesus* and the works of Men'. These links provide a structure for the further analysis.

Part Two, 'Evaluating Aleksandr Men''s Position with Regard to Some Specific Issues', includes three chapters. In chapter 4, Men''s understanding of the position of Jesus Christ among the other founders or reformers of the world's religions is investigated. Chapter 5 discusses Men''s understanding of the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions in comparison to the revelation of Jesus Christ. Chapter 6 examines Men''s concept of *faith* as human response to Christ's revelation compared to the notion of *belief* (as he sees it) in the non-biblical religions.

The study demonstrates that before the appearance of *Dominus Iesus* Men' had already developed an explicitly Christian approach to the world's religions, which for the most part is in line with the Catholic position as later presented in the Declaration. The concluding chapter summarises the findings of the research, suggests the possible directions for further study, and indicates the practical relevance of Men''s works on the world's religions for the contemporary Catholic theology.

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Without this access to ample materials related to Aleksandr Men`, my project would have been virtually impossible. Андрей Ерёмин [Andrey Yeryomin], who had known Fr Aleksandr personally for a number of years, has provided important information on his works on religions of the world. Finally, I should like to express my special thanks to those closest to me, especially my wife Aistè, as well as our children Agota and Jonas. Without their patience, support and encouragement, this research would have been utterly impossible.

ABBREVIATIONS

In the following list, the Catholic Church documents are abbreviated as a combination of the first letters of their title (except for *CDF*, which is an institution and not a document). The titles of the other works are abbreviated as one word. The dates after the titles of the Catholic Church documents refer to the promulgation of respective documents, not to their publication.

- AG** *Ad Gentes Divinitus* (Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church's missionary activity), 1965.
- Answers** МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *Отец Александр Мень отвечает на вопросы слушателей*. Сост. Анастасия АНДРЕЕВА [*Fr Aleksandr Men` Answers the Questions of the Audience*. Ed. Anastasiya ANDREEVA]. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 1999.
- CCC** *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994.
- CDF** Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
- Christianity** МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. 'Христианство. Лекция 8 сентября 1990 г.' [*'Christianity. Lecture of 8 September 1990'*]. In *Быть Христианином. Интервью и последняя лекция*. Сост. Марк МАКАРОВ [*To Be Christian. Interview and the Last Lecture*. Ed. Mark MAKAROV], 17-30. Москва: Протестант, 1994.
- CNCDF** Commentary on the *Notification* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Regarding the Book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Father Jacques Dupuis, S.J. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), 2001.
- Creed** МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *Верую... Беседы о Никео-Царьградском Символе веры*. Ред. Марина НАСОНОВА, Роза АДАМЯНЦ, Павел МЕНЬ [*I Believe... Discussions on the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*. Eds. Marina NASONOVA, Roza ADAMYANTZ, Pavel MEN`]. Москва: Храм Святых бессребреников Космы и Дамияна в Шубине, 2001.
- Culture** МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *Мировая духовная культура*. Ред. Марина НАСОНОВА, Роза АДАМЯНЦ, Павел МЕНЬ [*Spiritual Culture of the World*. Eds. Marina NASONOVA, Roza ADAMYANTZ, Pavel MEN`]. Москва: Храм Святых бессребреников Космы и Дамияна в Шубине, 2002.

<i>DI</i>	<i>Dominus Iesus</i> (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church), 2000.
<i>Dialogue</i>	МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. Трудный путь к диалогу. Ред. Лидия КОРЕНЕВА, Наталья МАТЯШ, Павел МЕНЬ [A Hard Road towards Dialogue. Eds. Lidiya KORENYOVA, Natal'ya MATYASH, Pavel MEN`]. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2001.
<i>Dictionary</i>	МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. Библиологический словарь, т. 1-3 [Dictionary of the Bible, volumes 1-3]. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2002.
<i>Dionysus</i>	МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. IV. Дионис, Логос, Судьба: Греческая религия и философия от эпохи колонизации до Александра [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. IV. Dionysus, Logos and Fate: Greek Religion and Philosophy from Colonisation to Alexander]. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2002.
<i>EN</i>	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> (Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI), 1975.
<i>Eng.</i>	English
<i>Gates</i>	МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. III. У врат молчания: Духовная жизнь Китая и Индии в середине первого тысячелетия до нашей эры [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. III. At the Gates of Silence: Spiritual Life of China and India in the Middle of the First Millennium B.C.]. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2002.
<i>Gk.</i>	Greek
<i>Interview</i>	МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. 'Быть Христианином. Интервью 29 июля 1990 г.' [To Be a Christian. Interview of 29 July 1990']. In Быть Христианином. Интервью и последняя лекция. Сост. Марк МАКАРОВ. [To Be a Christian. Interview and the Last Lecture, ed. Mark MAKAROV], 3-15. Москва: Протестант, 1994.
<i>Lat.</i>	Latin
<i>LG</i>	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> (Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 1964.
<i>Life</i>	МАСЛЕНИКОВА, Зоя [MASLENIKOVA, Zoya]. Александр Мень. Жизнь [Aleksandr Men`. His Life]. Москва: Захаров, 2002.

- Magism** МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. II. Магизм и единобожие: Религиозный путь человечества до эпохи великих учителей [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. II. Magism and Monotheism: Religious Path of Mankind up to the Epoch of the Great Teachers]*. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2001.
- Messengers** МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. V. Вестники Царства Божия: Библейские пророки от Амоса до Реставрации (VIII-IV вв. до н.э.) [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. V. The Messengers of the Kingdom of God: Biblical Prophets from Amos to the Restoration (7th-4th cent. B.C.)]*. Брюссель: Жизнь с Богом, 1986.
- NA** *Nostra Aetate* (Vatican Council II, *Declaration* on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions), 1965.
- Objections** RATZINGER, Joseph Cardinal. 'Cardinal Ratzinger Answers the Main Objections Raised against the *Declaration "Dominus Iesus"*'. *L'Osservatore Romano* (weekly edition in English) 1669-1671, nos. 47-49.
- Pastor** ЕРЕМИН, Андрей [YERYOMIN, Andrey]. *Отец Александр Мень. Пастырь на рубеже веков [Father Aleksandr Men`. Pastor on the Verge of the Centuries]*. Москва: Carte Blanche, 2001.
- RM** *Redemptoris Missio* (Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II), 1990.
- Russ.** Russian
- Son** МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *Сын Человеческий [Son of Man]*. Брюссель: Жизнь с Богом, 1983.
- Sources** МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. I. Истоки религии [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. I. The Sources of Religion]*. Брюссель: Жизнь с Богом, 1991.
- Threshold** МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. VI. На пороге Нового Завета: От эпохи Александра Македонского до проповеди Иоанна Крестителя [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. VI. On the Threshold of the New Testament: from Alexander of Macedonia to the Preaching of John the Baptist]*. Брюссель: Жизнь с Богом, 1983.
- VISWR** Vatican Information Services (5 September 2000). 'World Religions are not Complementary to Revelation'; [http://faithleap.home.att.net/Dominus Jesus news.htm#Article%20Dominus%20Iesus](http://faithleap.home.att.net/Dominus_Jesus_news.htm#Article%20Dominus%20Iesus) [8 October 2005].

Witness HAMANT, Yves. *Alexander Men: A Witness for Contemporary Russia. A Man For Our Times*. Transl. Fr Steven BIGHAM. Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1995.

NOTE ON THE transliteration OF RUSSIAN

The present study uses extensive sources written in Russian and containing numerous proper nouns and terminology, some of which will have to be transliterated. For reasons of clarity and convenience, Russian will be transliterated as accurately as possible. The standard scholarly convention has been adopted here, so the name of Aleksandr Men' is being presented with an additional diacritical mark ['] to indicate the soft sound in Russian, that does not have any corresponding letter in English.

The methods of transliteration of Cyrillic in the West may sometimes be quite confusing.¹ All of them, including the one developed here, are in their nature a kind of a compromise. The system of transliteration adopted in this thesis represents an attempt to present the pronunciation of the Russian words as closely to the original as possible. Because of this primary concern, some exceptions had to be introduced into the principle of univocacy: the Cyrillic letter *Е е* can be transliterated in two different ways, namely by the Latin characters *E e* or *Ye ye*, depending on the pronunciation of the Russian word; two Cyrillic letters *Е е* and *Э э* are transliterated by only one Latin character *E e*, analogously as *Ы ы* and *И и* by Latin *I i* only. To avoid ambiguity, the transliterated form of a word is presented in square brackets side by side with

¹ Cf., for example, differences in the following systems of transliteration: CAMPBELL, George L. *Handbook of Scripts and Alphabets*. London: Routledge, 1997, p. 46. ПОТАПОВА N. F. *Russian. An Elementary Course. Book I*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954, pp. 4-5. ГИЛЯРЕВСКИЙ, Р. С, СТАРОСТИН, Б. А. [GILYAREVSKY, R. S, STAROSTIN, B. A.]. *Иностранные имена и названия в русском тексте. Справочник [Foreign Names and Titles in Russian Text. Handbook]*. Москва: Международные отношения, 1978, pp. 225-226. The system of transliteration adopted in this thesis is based, with some modifications, on the one presented by Potapova. In footnotes and bibliography of this thesis the surnames of authors, editors and translators are printed in small capitals in order to differentiate them from the first names.

the Russian original when it appears for the first time (e.g., Владимир Соловьев [Vladimir Solovyov], Тарасовка [Tarasovka], вера [vera]). When the same word appears for the second and subsequent times, its transliterated form is presented alone (e.g., Vladimir Solovyov, Tarasovka, vera). In bibliographical references, the names of the Russian authors, editors and translators are always in both the original and the transliterated forms. In the case when the names are well familiar to the Western reader, the traditionally accepted transliteration forms are used (for example, *Khrushchev* instead of *Khrushchyov*, *Dostoyevsky* instead of *Dostoyevskiy*, *Maria* instead of *Mariya*). To be consistent, I have adopted the following system of transliteration of Russian:

Russian	English	Russian	English
А а	A a	П п	P p
Б б	B b	Р р	R r
В в	V v	С с	S s
Г г	G g	Т т	T t
Д д	D d	У у	U u
Е е	E e, Ye ye	Ф ф	F f
Ё ё	Yo yo	Х х	Kh kh
Ж ж	Zh zh	Ц ц	Tz tz
З з	Z z	Ч ч	Ch ch
И и	I i	Ш ш	Sh sh
Й й	Y y	Щ щ	Shch shch
К к	K k	Ъ ъ	''
Л л	L l	Ы ы	I i (guttural i)
М м	M m	Ь ь	'
Н н	N n	Э э	E e (guttural e)
О о	O o	Ю ю	Yu yu
		Я я	Ya ya

As to the spelling of the terms and proper nouns that originally come from various languages related to different cultures and religions of the world, the transliteration of Encyclopædia Britannica is being followed here (hence Bhagavadgita instead of Bhagavad Gita, Akhenaton instead of Ikhnaton, etc.). The several Lithuanian names that appear in the text are written in their original form here (e.g., Dr Stasiulevičiūtė).

INTRODUCTION

On 9 September 1990 in Russia, a middle-aged Russian Orthodox priest Александр Владимирович Мень [Aleksandr Vladimirovich Men`] was brutally murdered on his way to a celebration of the Sunday liturgy. He had spent the whole of his life doing pastoral work in several undistinguished villages near Moscow, but his writings and ministry continued to attract the attention of thousands of Russians from all walks of life for several decades. This is what Jane Ellis, a British observer, wrote six years after his death:

It is still difficult to convey adequately the full impact of Archpriest Aleksandr Men's life and death. His murder sent shockwaves throughout Russia and beyond and had a deep and irreversible effect on his parishioners and all who knew him—and they were many....

Father Aleksandr was a widely-read and erudite scholar, whose books on Christianity—published abroad under pseudonyms—were in great demand in Russia.... Moscow academics and local villagers alike were his parishioners.¹

The interest in his personality and legacy keeps growing, and his influence on Russia is unquestionable. In the West, too, Fr Men` has been known since 1960s. However, only a small part of his writings has been translated into Western languages so far. Thus, one of the aims of the present thesis is to make available to English readers more knowledge of the legacy of this remarkable thinker and a truly extraordinary priest. From the theological perspective, Aleksandr Men` is one of the most controversial figures of the Russian Orthodox Church during the second half of the 20th century. A Russian

¹ ELLIS, Jane. *The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness*. London: Macmillan Press, 1996, p. 113. In most English texts related to Aleksandr Men` his name is transliterated in a simplified form—Aleksandr Men or Alexander Menn. This variant of transliteration will be preserved in the quotations from those sources in the present thesis.

philosopher Леонид Василенко [Leonid Vasilenko] has observed that as early as the 1970's, 'Men' was *unofficially* accused of various heresies, "Jewish-masonry", "Tolstoyism" (Russ. *жидомасонство, толстовство*), pro-Catholic tendencies, and other things'.² Religious leaders like Aleksandr Men' tend to provoke two kinds of reaction—either respect and admiration, which in extreme cases may express itself in exaggerated idealisation, or negative criticism, which may be dismissive and very emotional.³ The task of the present study is to present a well-measured critical evaluation of Men's works that avoids these excesses. Among his numerous writings and lecturing, an important place in Men's legacy belongs to topics related to religions of the world. This thesis will focus primarily on this part of his work, as especially relevant in the present time of globalisation when intense interchanges between cultures and religions are taking place.

After the Second Vatican Council, the relationships between the Catholic Church and the other religions developed rapidly. Simultaneously, there appeared an

² ВАСИЛЕНКО, ЛЕОНИД [VASILENKO, Leonid]. 'Вокруг имени отца Александра Меня' ['Around the Name of Fr Aleksandr Men']. *Русская мысль* [Russian Thought], no. 3942 (21 August 1992), 10, emphasis added. Unless otherwise noted, in the present paper all italicised material within quotations are emphases given in the original text. Some Russian nationalistic circles suspect Jews of *Jewish-masonry*, i.e., participation in the secret Masonic plans to harm, among other objects, the Russian Orthodox Church or Russia in general. *Tolstoyism* means religious and ethical teachings of Russian writer Лев Толстой [Lev Tolstoy] (1828-1910). The Russian Orthodox Church excommunicated him in 1901. Men' described Tolstoy's teaching as 'having very little in common with Christianity' (МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN', Aleksandr]. *Библиологический словарь, т. 3* [Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 3]. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2002, p. 252. Hereafter quoted as *Dictionary*).

³ Men's followers and supporters are sometimes disdainfully called by their opponents *menevtzi* (Russ. *меневцы*), which could be translated as 'those of Men'. However, sometimes the word *menevtzi* is used in reference to a group wider than Men's direct followers, namely, to identify those in the Russian Orthodox Church who are displaying pro-Western views in general (see, for example: ЧЛЕНОВ, Михаил [CHLENOV, Mikhail], БАБУРИН, Владимир [BABURIN, Vladimir]. 'Радио Свобода. "Лицом к лицу"' ['Radio Freedom. "Face to Face"]'; <http://www.svoboda.org/programs/fff/2005/fff.021305.asp> [9 June 2005].

increased urgency to explain various theological aspects of these relationships. These explanations were characterized by recurrent problems, which have been periodically addressed by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. One of the documents devoted to these problems is the Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, promulgated in 2000. Its purpose is explained as follows:

In the practice of dialogue between the Christian faith and other religious traditions, as well as in seeking to understand its theoretical basis more deeply, new questions arise that need to be addressed through pursuing new paths of research, advancing proposals, and suggesting ways of acting that call for attentive discernment. In this task, the present *Declaration* seeks to recall to Bishops, theologians, and all the Catholic faithful, certain indispensable elements of Christian doctrine, which may help theological reflection in developing solutions consistent with the contents of the faith and responsive to the pressing needs of contemporary culture.⁴

The object of the present research is the theological correlation between the position of *Dominus Iesus* and that of Fr Men`. At the outset of this study, it is important to define (a) its aims, (b) its scope and limits, (c) its methodology and structure, and (d) its sources. These issues are considered in the following four subsections.

(a) Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this dissertation is to show how the approach of Aleksandr Men` to the world's religions has anticipated the formulation of the Catholic teaching on this subject in the subsequent Declaration *Dominus Iesus*. The secondary aim, as has already been stated, is to make some knowledge of the

⁴ *DI* 3. All the references to Catholic Church documents are presented with their paragraph numbers as they appear in the officially approved editions.

activities and legacy of Fr Men' better available to English readers. To achieve the primary aim, I intend to compare two understandings of the relationship between Christianity and the other religions, namely, *the* official Catholic attitude as expressed in *Dominus Iesus*, and a Russian Orthodox position—that of Fr Aleksandr Men'.⁵ The starting point for the comparison requires some explanation.

On the one hand, Men' is separated from *Dominus Iesus* by time and denominational differences. He died ten years before the promulgation of the Declaration, so he could never have had any direct contact with it. He was a Russian Orthodox, whereas *Dominus Iesus*, as it will be shown in chapter 3, is the Catholic Magisterium's document addressed to Catholics, and it is from them that a certain response is required. Therefore, the Declaration's doctrinal authority would not be normative for Men' even if he had lived to see its promulgation. On the other hand, there are some significant factors that make the positions of *Dominus Iesus* and Men' closely related and comparable. First of all, both were inspired by a primarily pastoral motive. As it will be shown in chapters 1-3, the intention of bringing the people closer to God was the main purpose of all of Men''s works, and *Dominus Iesus* was also motivated by the need of proclaiming the Gospel. But the most decisive factor that allows a systematic evaluation of Aleksandr Men''s views in the light of *Dominus Iesus* is their common attention to the non-biblical religions. The Declaration presents guidelines for theologians who are exploring the relationship between

⁵ A Russian Orthodox position of Men' is not to be confused with *the* Russian Orthodox position of this Church. Although the two positions may differ in some respect, I do not intend to compare them as that does not directly pertain to the present study.

Christianity and the other religions, while Men` develops comprehensive and well-defined views on the subject. The evaluation as it is intended in this paper is not much influenced by the fact that Men` was not a *Catholic* theologian. For, as it will be discussed in chapter 3, in the area of the inter-religious dialogue *Dominus Iesus* reasserts the same fundamental doctrines on the uniqueness and universality of Christ's revelation and salvation that have always been held by both the Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Churches,⁶ as well as by many other Christian denominations. It may be asked then, since the positions of the two Churches are essentially identical, is it not clear from the very outset that Men`'s view should also be the same? After all, Men` was more than an ordinary Russian orthodox, he was a priest of this Church. However, as it will be shown in 3.2.1, it cannot be taken for granted any longer that these fundamental doctrines are held by everyone who claims to be a Christian or even a Catholic. At the second half of the 20th century, the so-called religious pluralists have been radically reinterpreting the basic Christian doctrines in such ways that Christianity seems to have lost much of its claims at universality or uniqueness.⁷ Thus, a question logically arises, did similar problems affect the views of a Russian Orthodox theologian, famous for his pro-Western position and considered rather liberal by some of his colleagues in the Russian Orthodox Church?

⁶ With only several exceptions, such as the *Filioque* problem (this particular point will be discussed later).

⁷ The position of religious pluralists could be represented by works of such theologians as Paul Knitter (a Catholic) and John Hick (a Presbyterian). For an evaluation of their views see, for example, DULLES, Avery Cardinal. 'World Religions and the New Millennium. A Catholic Perspective'. In *In many and Diverse Ways: in Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, eds. Daniel KENDALL, Gerald O'COLLINS, 8-9. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003; RATZINGER, Joseph. 'Relativism: the Central Problem for Faith Today'; <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZRELA.HTM> [20 July 2005].

The reason why Men's works are evaluated in the light of *Dominus Iesus* and not other Catholic documents on the inter-religious dialogue is that *Dominus Iesus* is particularly suited for such an evaluation: on the one hand, it collects and systematically arranges the main magisterial pronouncements on the non-biblical religions scattered throughout numerous documents issued since Vatican II. On the other hand, the Declaration is designed as a set of guidelines for theological investigations into the relationship between Christianity and the other religions. As it will be shown in more detail in chapter 3, the specific purpose and method of *Dominus Iesus* makes this document especially useful for evaluating the views of individual theologians or schools on this issue.

(b) Scope and Limits

The aim of the thesis decides its scope and limits. On the one hand, the scope is determined by the range of the problems discussed in *Dominus Iesus*. On the other hand, not all the questions raised by the Declaration are relevant to the works of Aleksandr Men'. To compare Men's views with the guidelines presented in *Dominus Iesus*, this research will concentrate on the part of Men's legacy which deals with the world's religions, primarily the prehistoric shamanistic religions, religions of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, China, Canaan, Greece and Rome, as well as with Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. As it has already been noted, the present study will not analyse the correlation between Men's views on the world's religions and those of the Russian Orthodox Church. This thesis is not going to compare the positions of the Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Churches on this issue,

either.⁸ Finally, it does not intend to consider Men's writings from the standpoint of religious studies.

In his works, Aleksandr Men devotes significant attention to the religion of the Old Testament. The relationship between this religion and Christianity, however, will not be analysed in the present paper,⁹ as this relationship is not discussed in *Dominus Iesus*. As has been explained by bishop (now Cardinal) Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews,

[*Dominus Iesus*] does not deal with the question of the theology of Catholic-Jewish relations, proclaimed by *Nostra Aetate*, and of subsequent Church teaching. What the document tries to "correct" is another category, namely the attempts by some Christian theologians to find a kind of "universal theology" of interreligious relations, which, in some cases, has led to indifferentism, relativism and syncretism.¹⁰

From the position of the Catholic Church, Christianity is related to Judaism in a unique way that sets the religion of Israel apart from the other religions of the world. This has been explicitly stressed, for example, in one of the recent documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

It must be noted that the relationship between Christianity and Judaism requires an altogether singular explanation, because, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, of "the spiritual ties which link the people of the New Covenant to the stock of Abraham".¹¹

⁸ As it was said, the positions of the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches coincide in regard to the Christological doctrines discussed in *DI*. As to the other aspects of the relationship between Christianity and the other religions, various differences between the views of the two Churches can be observed.

⁹ More precisely, Men's views on the relationship between Christianity and the Old Testament religion will be considered only to clarify his understanding of the relationship between Christianity and the non-biblical religions.

¹⁰ KASPER, Cardinal Walter. 'ILC [International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee] meeting, New York, 1-4 May 2001. "Exchange of Information" session. *Dominus Iesus*', no. 1; <http://www.nccbuscc.org/seia/kasper.htm> [8 October 2005].

¹¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (hereafter referred to as *CDF*). Commentary on the *Notification* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Regarding the Book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Father Jacques Dupuis, S.J., endnote 1. Hereafter

(c) *Methodology and Structure*

The main method employed in the present study will be theological analysis, which consists of uncovering theological principles underlying Men's treatment of the world's religions and comparing them to the guidelines presented in *Dominus Iesus*. However, before approaching this analysis in a systematic manner, some preparatory work has to be done. This is the goal of the three chapters that comprise Part One, entitled 'Preparing the Way for an Evaluation'. The political and cultural context in which Aleksandr Men lived strongly influenced his world view and his writings. Therefore, the first chapter of this thesis will be devoted to the overview of the life and times of Fr Men. Chapter 2 reviews the part of Men's legacy that directly pertains to the present research, namely, his writings on the world's religions. This chapter analyses the contents and the methods of these works, and it also considers the main influences on Men's understanding of the history of religions. Chapter 3 introduces the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*. It reviews the historical and theological context of the document, as well as its nature and contents. The final section of the chapter shows the theological links between *Dominus Iesus* and the legacy of Aleksandr Men. These links provide the structure for the subsequent analysis in Part Two.

Part Two is entitled 'Evaluating Aleksandr Men's Position with Regard to Some Specific Issues'. It examines Men's approach to the religions of the world from

quoted as *CNCDF*. Quoting *Nostra Aetate* (Vatican Council II, *Declaration* on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions), 4. Hereafter quoted as *NA*.

the standpoint of the Declaration's guidelines, arranged in this thesis into three groups. Consequently, Part Two is divided into three chapters. Chapter 4 analyses Men's understanding of Jesus Christ's position among the other founders and reformers of the world's religions. Chapter 5 examines Men's approach to the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions in comparison with the revelation of Jesus Christ. Chapter 6 discusses Men's view of the relationship between *faith* in Christianity and *belief* in the non-biblical religions.

Unless specifically defined, the standard theological terms used in this thesis (e.g., revelation, salvation, Magisterium) are understood the same way as they are used in *Dominus Iesus* and the other related Catholic magisterial documents, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* first of all.¹² The other terms that pertain specifically to the present research (e.g., *religious leader*, *religious attitude*) are defined at the beginning of the chapters in which they are employed.

(d) Sources

There are two main sources that represent Aleksandr Men's views on the world's religions: the six-volume history of religions *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life*, and the series of eight lectures entitled *Spiritual Culture of the World* (both examined in detail in chapter 2). The Catholic viewpoint will be

¹² Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum* points out the particular importance of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (hereafter quoted as CCC) as the main reference source for the Catholic doctrine (see *Fidei Depositum* 3). Because of that, CCC is distinguished here among the other magisterial documents.

represented here by the Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (examined in chapter 3). Fr Men' wrote in Russian. The present thesis is based chiefly on the materials hitherto unpublished in English. Unless otherwise stated, all the quotations from Russian are translated by the author of this thesis. Some of the material has not yet been published in Russian either. This explains the frequent references to the Internet regarding the unpublished materials.¹³ The date in square brackets that follows the Internet address in the footnotes and the bibliography indicates when that web page was accessed (e.g., <http://www.alexandrmn.ru> [15 February 2003]).

Despite the fact that there exist numerous publications about Aleksandr Men' both in Russian and English, very little has been written about his attitude to the world's religions, which is the particular focus of this study. Two authors, however, should be mentioned with regard to Men''s view of this subject. Андрей Ерёмин [Andrey Yeryomin] has published a lengthy article entitled 'Fr Aleksandr's Six-Volume History of Religions *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life*'. The article has been inserted as an appendix to his book *Father Aleksandr Men'. Pastor on the Verge of the Centuries*.¹⁴ A Russian Orthodox deacon (now priest) Андрей Кураев [Andrey Kurayev] has provided critical commentary on practical aspects of Men''s approach towards the non-Christian

¹³ An excellent collection of Men''s works has been made freely available on the Internet by Фонд имени протоиерея Александра Меня [Fr Aleksandr Men' Foundation]; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru> [15 February 2003]. Beside the other materials, it includes the full text of all Men''s books, a great number of his articles and lectures, as well as audio and video records.

¹⁴ See ЕРЕМИН, Андрей [YERYOMIN, Andrey]. *Отец Александр Мень. Пастырь на рубеже веков* [Father Aleksandr Men'. Pastor on the Verge of the Centuries]. Москва, Carte Blanche, 2001, pp. 442-480. Hereafter quoted as *Pastor*. Yeryomin has been acting as the adviser for publishing Men''s six-volume history of religions in Russia.

religions in his article 'Александр Мень: потерявшийся миссионер' ['Aleksandr Men': a Lost Missionary'].¹⁵ Beside these two articles, some passing comments on the subject have been made by several other authors. They will be taken into account in this paper.

The present study intends to contribute to research of the legacy of Aleksandr Men' in a different manner. I am aiming to evaluate Men''s views on the religions of the world in the light of the Catholic teaching presented in the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*. None of the authors mentioned above (or any others, to my knowledge) has assessed Men''s theology in light of this official Catholic perspective.

¹⁵ See КУРАЕВ, Андрей [KURAYEV, Andrey]. *Вызов экуменизма [Challenge of Ecumenism]*. Москва: Фонд "Благовест", 1997; <http://www.kuraev.ru/eku8.html> [7 February 2004]. The same article with small modifications was included in: КУРАЕВ, Андрей [KURAYEV, Andrey]. *Оккультизм в Православии [Occultism in the Orthodoxy]*. Москва: Фонд "Благовест", 1998; <http://www.wco.ru/biblio/books/kur3-ap/Main.htm> [7 February 2004].

Part One

PREPARING THE WAY FOR AN EVALUATION

CHAPTER 1. THE LIFE AND WORK OF FR ALEKSANDR MEN`

1.1 Introduction

Although Fr Aleksandr Vladimirovich Men` is a comparatively recent figure, the biographical material on him is far from lacking. In fact, it is rapidly growing. The purpose of this chapter is to review this material in a way that can best present the preparation for and the actual development of Fr Aleksandr's ministry, a significant part of which was closely related to the world's religions. The biographical details are viewed here in the political context of the aggressive Soviet atheism, where all religions (including Christianity) were fiercely persecuted. Aleksandr Men``s life and ministry are closely connected with the history of those persecutions.

Men``s autobiographical material is scarce. He has written a short essay called 'Recollections from My Student Years', and a chronological synopsis 'The Influences and the Horizon of Reading'.¹ The latter outlines his main literary and personal influences, as well as his own works in the period of 1947-1969. Some facts are described in Men``s 'Memoirs', originally recorded on a tape, but later transcribed and published.² Besides, some separate biographical details are

¹ Both 'Влияния и круг чтения' ['His Influences and His Horizon of Reading'] and 'Воспоминания о студенческих годах' ['Recollections of My Student Years'] are included as, respectively, Appendices 7 and 8, in: Бычков, Сергей [Bichkov, Sergey]. *Хроника нераскрытого убийства* [Chronicle of an Undisclosed Murder]. Москва: Русское рекламное издательство, 1996; <http://www.alexandrmenn.ru/books/bychkov/bych01.html> [10 June 2003].

² МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. 'Воспоминания' ['Memoirs']. *Континент* [Continent] no. 88 (1996, no. 2), 242-293; <http://www.krotov.org/library/m/menn/04/00035.html> [14 July 2003].

mentioned in his several interviews and letters.³ Fr Aleksandr's life is mainly known through biographical writings about him. Зоя Масленикова [Zoya Maslenikova], who had known Fr Men' very closely for many years, wrote an extensive biography entitled *Aleksandr Men'. His Life*.⁴ Another major biography was written by a Frenchman Yves Hamant. This volume is presently the main source, introducing Men''s life to the Western world. Shortly after its publication in French in 1993, it was translated and published in Russian and English.⁵ Hamant had lived for many years in Russia and knew Fr Men' personally since 1970. This biography seems to be especially valuable, as it presents a broader picture of the political and social circumstances of Men''s lifetime. Beside these two, there exist numerous other publications which also contain biographical material about Fr Men'.⁶

³ Two of the interviews are included in: Бычков [BICHKOV], op. cit. (1996), as Appendices 6 and 9, entitled respectively: 'О моих предках' ['About my Ancestry'], and 'Дело Церкви—Дело Божие' ['Business of the Church—Business of God']. Some important biographical details are found in one of Men''s letters: МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN', Aleksandr]. 'Письмо к Е. Н.' ['Letter to E. N.']. In *Aequinox. Сборник памяти о. Александра Меня*, ред. И. Г. ВИШНЕВЕЦКИЙ, Е. Г. РАБИНОВИЧ [Aequinox. Collection of Memories about Fr Aleksandr Men', eds. I. G. VISHNEVETZKY, E. G. RABINOVICH], 182-202. Москва: Carte Blanche, 1991.

⁴ МАСЛЕНИКОВА, Зоя [MASLENIKOVA, Zoya]. *Александр Мень. Жизнь [Aleksandr Men'. His Life]*. Москва: Захаров, 2002. Hereafter quoted as *Life*.

⁵ АМАН, Ив [AMAN, Iv]. *Отец Александр Мень. Христов свидетель в наше время [Fr Aleksandr Men'. Christ's Witness in Our Times]*. Transl. Н. В. ГАРСКАЯ [N. V. GARSKAYA]. Москва: Рудомино, 2000. НАМАНТ, Yves. *Alexander Men: A Witness for Contemporary Russia. A Man For Our Times*. Transl. Fr Steven BIGHAM. Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1995. Hereafter quoted as *Witness*.

⁶ See, e.g., ЗОРИН, Александр [ZORIN, Aleksandr]. *Ангел-чернорабочий. Воспоминания об о. Александре Мене [Angel-Labourer. Memories about Fr Aleksandr Men']*. Москва: Издательская группа "Прогресс"—"Культура", 1993; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru/books/angel/angel.html> [10 July 2003]. Пастор. Илюшенко, Владимир [ILYUSHENKO, Vladimir]. *Отец Александр Мень: жизнь и смерть во Христе [Father Aleksandr Men': Life and Death in Christ]*. Москва: Независимое издательство "Пик", 2000. A shorter biography in English is included in an anthology of Men''s writings: ШУКМАН, Ann. 'Introduction'. In *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century. The Prophetic Writings of Alexander Men*, eds. E. ROBERTS, A. SHUKMAN, 1-25. New York: Continuum, 1996. His shorter biographies are now available on the Internet, too. See, e.g., Фонд имени протоиерея Александра Меня [Fr Aleksandr Men' Foundation]. 'Краткая биографическая справка' ['Short Biographical Reference']; http://www.alexandrmn.ru/biogr/kr_biogr.html [12 July 2003]. Фонд

1.2 Rooted in the Catacomb Church

Aleksandr Men', the first-born son in a Jewish family of Елена Семеновна [Yelena Semyonovna] and Владимир Григорьевич Мень [Vladimir Grigor'yevich Men'],⁷ was born on 22 April 1935. Both the political situation in Russia at that time and his family background deserve some special attention as very important factors for a better understanding of Fr Aleksandr Men''s life and ministry.

1.2.1 The Catacomb Church

The phenomenon, which lasted for almost 20 years in Russia and is known as 'the Catacomb Church' represents one of the most brutal Christian persecutions throughout history.⁸ When the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia in 1917, they immediately started attacking the Church. The Communist ideologists like Marx and Lenin considered religion to be 'the opium for the people' (Russ. *опиум народа*, the phrase commonly accepted in the former Soviet Union for labelling religion), and a means for maintaining economic oppression. The newly established Bolshevik government was aiming at total elimination of religion

имени протоиерея Александра Меня [Fr Aleksandr Men' Foundation]. 'Aleksander Men'; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru/biogr/english.html> [12 July 2003]. ЕРЕМИН, Андрей [YERYOMIN, Andrey]. 'Биография отца Александра' ['Biography of Fr Aleksandr']; <http://alekmen.narod.ru/Inv02.html> [12 July 2003]. КРОТОВ, Yakov. 'Fr Alexander Men'; <http://home.earthlink.net/~amenpage/amen-bio2.htm> [12 July 2003]. BERNBAUM, John A. 'The Legacy of Fr Alexander Men'; <http://home.earthlink.net/~amenpage/bernbaum1.htm> [12 July 2003].

⁷ The Russian way of identifying a person by his or her patronymic, together with the forename and the family name, will be used here for the members of Aleksandr Men''s family. Other individuals will be identified by their forenames and family names only.

⁸ A recent book which brings to light some of the struggles of Christians for preserving their faith during that tragic period in the Russian life is written by Aleksandr Men''s aunt: ВАСИЛЕВСКАЯ, В. Я. [VASILEVSKAYA, V. Ya.]. *Катакомбы XX века. Воспоминания* [Catacombs of the XXth Century. Memoirs]. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2001.

from the hearts and minds of the population as a major obstacle on the road towards Communism. As Christianity was the dominant religion, the Russian Orthodox Church became the target of fiercest attacks.

The situation in the Russian Orthodox Church had not been easy for many decades before the Bolshevik revolution. In the beginning of the 18th century tsar Peter the Great eliminated the Patriarchate and subjugated the Russian Orthodox Church to the secular power of the tsars. This diminished the status of the Church in the eyes of the population, especially among the educated circles, and caused certain division between the Church and Russian culture. The situation started to improve gradually in the course of the 19th century due to the spiritual revival brought by such prominent individuals and groups as St Серафим Саровский [Serafim of Sarov] and the *startsy* (Russ. *старцы*) of Опти́на [Optina] monastery. The climax of overcoming this division is seen in the works of such world-famous Russian Christian writers and philosophers as Фёдор Достоевский [Fyodor Dostoyevsky], Владимир Соловьёв [Vladimir Solovyov], Павел Флоренский [Pavel Florensky], Николай Бердяев [Nikolay Berdyayev]. In 1917-1918, a synod of the Russian Orthodox Church re-established the Patriarchate and outlined a number of reforms. Patriarch Тихон [Tikhon] was elected head of the Russian Orthodox Church. The situation seemed to be improving, but unfortunately, these bits of hope were very soon shattered by the Bolshevik revolution and the subsequent repressions on the Church. A great number of churches and monasteries were closed, the clergy and many believers killed or exiled. The situation became especially hard after the death of Patriarch Tikhon in 1925. With the consent of the Soviet authorities,

Metropolitan Сергей [Sergy, Eng. *Sergius*] became head of the Church until a Synod could elect a new Patriarch. In 1927, Metropolitan Sergy in the name of the Russian Orthodox Church announced the declaration of loyalty to the Communist regime. This declaration was met by discontent of both the clergy and the faithful, which led to an open separation of some bishops from the legislation of Metropolitan Sergy.⁹ This eventually resulted in an underground movement called 'the Catacomb Church'. Meanwhile, the Communist regime continued devastating the Church. Within several years,

the Church seemed to have been eliminated from society; it had practically no visible existence. Religious life had not been destroyed, however; it continued, mostly in secret, in the catacombs—the catacombs of the twentieth century.¹⁰

1.2.2 Family Background

Aleksandr Men' described himself as a descendant from 'petty bourgeoisie, intelligentsia, and military'.¹¹ The ancestors on his mother's side had come to Russia, probably, from Poland no later than the beginning of the 19th century. Yelena Semyonovna was born in a Jewish family of the Цуперфейн [Tzuperfeyn]. Her grandmother was a devout woman who had greatly influenced her spiritual life. Notwithstanding her Jewish background, Yelena had been interested in Christianity since her early years, and at the age of nine she decided to receive Baptism. Her mother vigorously opposed her daughter's

⁹ An entry devoted to Metropolitan Sergy is found in Men's *Dictionary* (vol. 3, pp. 101-103). Besides describing Metropolitan's contribution to the development of Biblical theology in Russia, Men' gives a rather positive evaluation of his activity as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

¹⁰ *Witness*, p. 27.

¹¹ Бычков [BICHKOV], op. cit. (1996).

desire, but it was in vain. Yelena remained strongly attached to Christianity, even though her Baptism was postponed for various reasons until she was 26. The situation of Aleksandr's father Vladimir Grigor'yevich Men'¹² was quite different. Vladimir's father had been a very religious man, but Vladimir lost his faith at school due to his atheist teacher's influence. Vladimir Grigor'yevich received a good education—he graduated from two universities, and worked as an engineer-technologist for the rest of his life. He married Yelena Semyonovna Tzuperfeyn in 1934.

Another important person from Aleksandr Men`'s early years was his mother's cousin Вера Яковлевна Василевская [Vera Yakovlevna Vasilevskaya]. Together with Yelena Men`, this woman created a loving and faith-filled family atmosphere which proved to be a good soil for the ministry of the future priest. When Aleksandr Men` was born in 1935, both women had already become familiar with Fr Серафим Батюков [Serafim Batyukov] from the Catacomb Church. At that time, Yelena and Vera were searching for their spiritual identity, and were very much interested in Christianity, although not yet baptised. Beside their personal reasons for delayed Baptism, there were unfavourable social circumstances, too: Yelena's husband held a high position as head engineer at a factory, and Vera was a teacher. For such people Baptism was especially

¹² His name was changed from Vol'f Gershleybovich [Вольф Гершлейбович] to its Russian form Vladimir Grigor'yevich [Владимир Григорьевич]. Aleksandr Men` was usually addressed as Vladimirovich, even though sometimes Vol'fovich was also used. For more information see: Фонд имени протоиерея Александра Меня [Fr Aleksandr Men` Foundation]. 'Владимирович или Вольфович?' ['Vladimirovich or Vol'fovich?']; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru/biogr/vladvolf.html> [12 July 2003].

dangerous during the period of Stalin's¹³ 'Great Terror', which had started in the middle of the 1930s. However, the birth of her son helped Yelena Semyonovna to make a decision, and Fr Batyukov baptised both her and little Alik (Russ. *Алик*, a fond nickname for Aleksandr) on 3 September 1935. Not long after that, Vera Yakovlevna was also baptised by Fr Serafim. He was their spiritual director¹⁴ until his death in 1942.

1.2.3 Childhood Influences

Several factors can be considered most influential during Aleksandr Men's childhood. The immediate surroundings of his family life were greatly affected by the Christian lives of his mother and his aunt Vera Vasilevskaya. Besides, there were the activities of the Catacomb Church, where Fr Serafim Batyukov and some other priests played a major role. On the other hand, the anti-human Soviet regime constituted the broadest context for Men's childhood. Finally, all these factors were drastically affected by World War II, in which Russia became directly involved after 22 June 1941.

After Aleksandr's birth, his mother Yelena Semyonovna moved into the apartment of her cousin Vasilevskaya. The reason was the Men's' poor living conditions, while Vasilevskaya had a more comfortable apartment. She did not have her own family or children, so she became a kind of a second mother for

¹³ Joseph Stalin (the full Russian name Иосиф Виссарионович Сталин [Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin], the original Georgian family name Джугашвили [Dzhugashvili]). He was the head of the Communist party of the USSR in 1922-1953.

¹⁴ Close spiritual direction has deep traditions in the Russian Orthodox Church. A spiritual director, called the spiritual father (Russ. *духовный отец*), usually advises his spiritual children (Russ. *духовные дети*) in all decision making.

Aleksandr. On 1 December 1938 Aleksandr's brother Павел Владимирович Мень [Pavel Vladimirovich Men`] was born. The relationships among the four of them—two brothers, their mother, and aunt Vera, remained good throughout their lives. Their Christian faith served as a strong foundation for their deep and lasting unity. Unfortunately, the head of the family Vladimir Grigor`yevich Men` was not included into this intimate group. However, neither Fr Men` himself, nor his biographers mention any conflicts between Vladimir Grigor`yevich and the other members of the family, which shows that he was tolerant to their religion. In fact, Aleksandr Men` remembers him warmly as a 'very patient person, always kind and cheerful'.¹⁵

Fr Serafim Batyukov, their spiritual director, has greatly influenced the life of the two women and the boys. He lived in Загорск [Zagorsk] (called Сергиев Посад [Sergiyev Posad] before the revolution and currently again) near Moscow, and the family often went there secretly in order to participate in the liturgy or receive spiritual guidance. When the war between Germany and Russia started, Fr Serafim advised them to leave Moscow for Zagorsk, where they lived until their return to Moscow in 1943. This period of their life was especially hard, the family had to struggle daily to find food. Before his death in 1942, Fr Serafim put them into the spiritual care of two other priests from the Catacomb Church: Fr Иеракс Бочаров [Ieraks Bocharov] and Fr Петр Шипков [Pyotr Shipkov]. Unfortunately, they were both arrested in 1943. Their spiritual guidance was then passed to

¹⁵ БЫЧКОВ [BICHKOV], op. cit. (1996).

Mother Мария [Maria], who used to be head (Russ. *схиигуменья*) of a small community of underground nuns.

Aleksandr Men` had two main areas of interest in his early childhood (and they endured throughout his life), namely, nature and books. His love for animated nature later determined his choice of the area of studies in biology after high school. As to books, he started reading at the age of six. When he was seven, another area of interest appeared: he watched his first film, and that was the beginning of his life-long love for cinematography. On their return from Zagorsk in 1943, Aleksandr started school. Although he had numerous friends there, he did not like school at all. One of the reasons was that Aleksandr could already read and write very well (in his first grade he had read Goethe's *Faust* and Dante's *The Divine Comedy*), so school seemed rather boring. In general, the school years were perhaps the bleakest period in Men`s life. Nevertheless, he made good use of the time after classes: at the age of 12, he knew he wanted to become a priest, so he started preparing for that.

1.3 Preparation for the Ministry (1945-1958)

1.3.1 Political Situation in the USSR during the Years of Men`s Formation

The political and social developments after the war have to be considered in view of the earlier processes that had started with the aggression of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union in 1941. To mobilise the population for the war, the atheist regime lessened its persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church, and appealed to the people's national sentiments largely related to Christianity. Some churches spontaneously reopened and started functioning in

the areas occupied by the Nazi. In 1943, Stalin permitted a Synod, and Metropolitan Sergy was elected Patriarch. He soon died, however, and the next Synod elected a new Patriarch Alexis I in 1945. Bishops were appointed for every diocese, and important changes in the Church law were made. The bishop of the Catacomb Church Афанасий Сахаров [Afanasy Sakharov] acknowledged the new Patriarch and rejoined the Russian Orthodox Church. By this time, the Catacomb Church had lost most of its pastors because of the repressions. Stalin's regime after the war did not dare to close the newly reopened churches in the areas previously occupied by the Nazis. In addition, a few seminaries and two Theological Academies were permitted (they had all been closed after the Bolshevik revolution). Even though the repressions did not cease altogether, the pressure on the Church was lessened, which resulted in a certain growth of Christian life. This continued for several years. Unfortunately, around 1950 the persecutions of the Church became intensified again.

With Stalin's death in 1953, a new phase of life started in the Soviet Union. At the 20th Congress of the Communist Party, the leader of the country Никита Хрущев [Nikita Khrushchev] reported on the crimes of the Stalin period. The report was secret, but its contents soon became known widely. The famous Khrushchev's Thaw (Russ. *оттепель*) started. Many prisoners were freed from the Gulag, the people began discussing political and moral questions, and the first underground publications appeared. They later evolved into the famous 'self-publishing' (Russ. *самиздат*). Two famous slogans of that time were 'de-Stalinisation' and 'return to "Leninist norms"' (Russ. *десталинизации, возврат к "ленинским нормам"*). But in general, Khrushchev did not have intentions of

changing the political system of the country, as it was seen later from the brutal crushing of the revolt in Hungary in 1956, only a few months after the 20th Congress. At the beginning of the Thaw period, the pressure on the Russian Orthodox Church had been lessened, but in 1958 it was increased again.

1.3.2 The Formation of Men's World Outlook

A variety of religious activities became available after the war, so the 10-year-old Aleksandr Men` participated in them together with his mother and his aunt. He met Борис Васильев [Boris Vasil'yev], a University teacher and a priest of the former Catacomb Church. At Vasil'yev's home former spiritual children of Fr Serafim and other active priests used to meet. For Aleksandr Men` these gatherings meant 'an example of a solid parish community'¹⁶—a model which he will later try to embody in his parishes. Besides Mother Maria and Boris Vasil'yev, an important person in his life at that time was Николай Пестов [Nikolay Pestov], Professor of Chemistry. He provided Men` with materials for reading and helped him to become familiar with Western Christianity. Because of atheist ideology, the Soviet school syllabi excluded the best classical works of philosophy and literature. Fortunately, Aleksandr Men` was little affected by this deficiency of education: encouraged by his aunt Vera Vasilevskaya, he had seriously engaged himself in an independent reading programme since the age of ten. He discovered the works of the following Russian religious philosophers and writers, who made perhaps the greatest influence on his theological views: Nikolay Berdyayev, Сергей Булгаков [Sergey Bulgakov], Николай Лосский

¹⁶ *Witness*, p. 47.

[Nikolay Lossky], Pavel Florensky, Семен Франк [Semyon Frank]. At the age of fifteen Men` started reading Vladimir Solovyov, whom he subsequently considered his great teacher. Other areas of his reading included the Church Fathers and the history of biblical lands. Before graduating from high school in 1953, Men` had finished his independent reading of the full course of the seminary curriculum. The Western religious authors who made a significant influence on Aleksandr Men` were Christopher Dawson and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.¹⁷

After graduating from high school in 1953, Aleksandr Men` decided to study biology which had been one of his favourite subjects for many years. The same year he entered Moscow Fur Institute (Russ. *Московский Пушно-меховой институт*). The student years proved to be a very happy period of his life, and it coincided with a brighter period in the life of the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin. While studying at the Institute, Aleksandr Men` met Fr Николай Голубцов [Nikolay Golubtzov], who became his spiritual director. Fr Nikolay was a well-educated person. He had been related to the same circles of the Russian Orthodox Church as Men` himself. Due to his influence, Aleksandr Men` continued to form the same vision of the Christian ministry as that maintained by Frs Batyukov, Ieraks, Shipkov, and Mother Maria. At the Institute, he became a close friend of Глеб Якунин [Gleb Yakunin], who later was to become a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church, famous for his defence of human rights in the Soviet Union. In 1956, the Department of the Fur Institute where Aleksandr Men`

¹⁷ The main influences on Men`'s understanding of the world's religions are discussed in 2.2.

was studying moved to Иркутск [Irkutsk] in Siberia. The two final years of his studies in Siberia proved to be very important for Men's concept of his future priesthood. While studying in Irkutsk, Aleksandr became familiar with some Buddhist nations, and he could see the brutalities on Buddhism afflicted by the atheist regime. Another area of human suffering that he saw in Siberia was deportations. Men heard horrible stories of deportations, of children taken away from their parents and put to special colonies, where they had to die of diseases and bad food. All this helped Aleksandr to have a clearer understanding of his mission, namely,

to work for the awakening and development of Christian conscience,... which would make such things simply impossible.... To change the people's mentality, not only spread of the faith was needed, but also its rebirth on a higher level that should be closer to the Gospel ideal than that preserved by the traditional Orthodox life.¹⁸

Men's final years at the Institute were also important for his ecumenical views. At the age of 21-22, he studied Catholicism, and found many attractive qualities there. His opinion of Catholicism had been high all through his life. However, he did not see any necessity for becoming a Catholic: he 'considered the Church to be one (Russ. *едино*)'¹⁹ notwithstanding the visible division of Christians. During the fifth year of his studies, Men also worked as a stoker at the local office of the Russian Orthodox Church. This allowed him to know the everyday life of the office, which seemed rather gloomy. Nevertheless, he managed to overcome

¹⁸ *Life*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁹ Бычков [BICHKOV], op. cit. (1996). Men's view of the relationship between the Russian Orthodox and the Catholic Churches somewhat differed from the positions of both Churches on this matter. As a priest in the Russian Orthodox Church Men was often criticised for his pro-Catholic views (for more, see p. 47 ff., below).

'the temptation of viewing [the Russian Orthodox Church] as dead',²⁰ for he realised that separate members of any denomination could be open to the danger of spiritual lifelessness. As for Protestantism, he described his relationship to it as 'more complicated'. He wrote:

I was of a very high opinion about the evangelistic, prophetic, and moral spirit of Protestantism.... Nevertheless, I absolutely refused to be reconciled with the fact that the Protestants broke away from the unity of the Church (Russ. *единство Церквей*). The hierarchical structure (not to mention the Sacraments) is indispensable, as it provides the Church an opportunity to act as a true force in the world.²¹

Throughout his life, Aleksandr Men' was very open to close relationships among all Christian denominations.

While at Moscow Fur Institute, Aleksandr Men' started studying the materials of the course of Московская Духовная Академия [Moscow Theological Academy]. In 1955, he discovered for himself *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St Francis De Sales, whose spirituality became especially dear to him. While a student, Men' started writing his own books, the first of which was *History of the Church*. The first volume about the Early Church was finished in 1954, and the second, which dealt with the period until the 15th century—in 1957. The same year he started writing *What the Bible Says and What It Teaches*, and finished it in the autumn of 1958.²² In 1957 Aleksandr Men' married Наталья Федоровна Григоренко [Natal'ya Fyodorovna Grigoryenko], whom he had met at the Institute three years before. After their wedding, he had to go on studying for

²⁰ *Life*, p. 98.

²¹ *Life*, pp. 98-99.

²² None of these three volumes by Men' were published in their original form. They were partially included in his later books.

one more year, so they lived separately for some time: Natal'ya in Moscow, and Aleksandr in Siberia. During his final exams in the spring of 1958, Aleksandr Men' was expelled from the Institute under some fictitious pretext, while the real reason was his faith. He was not too saddened by this fact, because this meant an open way for him to pursue his ordination at once, without the three years of obligatory work after graduation.²³ He did not care for a diploma, and he was grateful for the chance to study and to increase his knowledge.

1.4 The Years of Ministry (1958-1990)

1.4.1 *The Soviet Union's Political Atmosphere in 1958-1990*

The end of Khrushchev's rule (1958-1964). As it has been mentioned in 1.3.1, Khrushchev's Thaw ended for the Russian Orthodox Church sooner than for the rest of the society, and in 1958 a new wide antireligious campaign was started. Most of the seminaries were closed, as well as many churches and monasteries. The regime changed its methods of pressure on the Church—it lessened its open aggressiveness, such as arrests, exiles or killing (even though these also remained in use to some extent), and preferred silent means of diminishing the Church's influence on the society. For example, churches were being closed under such 'neutral' pretexts as sanitation and urbanisation. Religious activities were reduced to liturgical service within the church walls. All attempts on the part of the Russian Orthodox Church hierarchy to find peaceful co-existence with the atheist state failed. This failure became especially obvious in 1961,

²³ There was a rule in the Soviet Union that after graduation a person had to work for 3 years in the position appointed by the state.

when the hierarchy was forced to call a Synod and to adopt the parish reform, aimed at destroying all spiritual life in parishes. Actual administrative power in a parish was given to a committee of three laymen, who in practice were easily controlled by the regime. Some priests and bishops tried to protest against the reform, but the majority had lost all hope. The protests of the society against these persecutions were too insignificant. Hamant observes the following:

The intellectuals did not ignore the Church through cowardice, indifference, or complicity. It [the Church] had been so well closed up in its ghetto, so well isolated from society, that they were not even aware that the Church was suffering repression. Only a few isolated people raised their voices publicly to denounce the antireligious campaign and the closing of churches and monasteries.²⁴

Brezhnev's era (1964-1982). On 14 October 1964, Khrushchev was forced to retire, and Леонид Брежнев [Leonid Brezhnev] came to rule the USSR. The authorities were trying to strengthen the regime, which had been somewhat destabilised by Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation campaign. The end of the Thaw was marked by the famous political trial and sentencing of the writers Андрей Синявский [Andrey Sinyavsky] and Юлий Даниэл [Yuly Daniel] in 1966. In less than two years the Prague Spring, which was aiming at a more humane form of Communism, was brutally crushed by military force. In the depths of Soviet population, however, some changes were happening: 'A formless discontent, passive but massive, was rising in the country.... The people were losing faith in the official ideology, though no one really noticed.'²⁵ In Brezhnev's period, this discontent took the form of a dissident movement (Russ. *диссидентство*). At

²⁴ *Witness*, p. 69.

²⁵ *Witness*, p. 86.

first, it was just spontaneous activity of some individuals, who rejected official ideology and claimed their right to independent thinking. The dissidents were punished: they were subjected to psychological pressure, placed into special psychiatric institutions, sent to the Gulag. All this, however, did not stop the people like Александр Солженицын [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn] or Андрей Сахаров [Andrey Sakharov]. In 1976 Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights (Russ. *Христианский комитет для защиты прав верующих*) was founded.²⁶ It managed to bring the problem of repressions against the Russian Orthodox Church and the individual believers to the high ranks of political life. The attempts of the regime to control the growth of discontent and to inspire a new zeal for building Communism, mostly failed. Soviet youth became particularly indifferent to officially promoted ideals. Gradually, people began to show more and more interest in spirituality and religion. Numbers of educated people, who had been raised in atheist families but became interested in Christianity and asked for Baptism, were increasing. Unfortunately, the Russian Orthodox Church was so harmed by aggressive atheism, that it was often unprepared to meet the needs of those new seekers or converts. Nevertheless, some priests and laity accepted the challenge and used this opportunity to help these seekers to find their place in the Russian Orthodox Church. Fr Aleksandr Men' was one of them. The pressure on active Christians and dissidents began to increase in 1979, due to Soviet invasion into

²⁶ The founder of the Committee was Fr Gleb Yakunin, a friend of Aleksandr Men's from the Institute in Irkutsk. Fr Yakunin led heroic struggle against the atheistic regime, he was arrested and sent to the Gulag.

Afghanistan and to the Moscow Olympics of 1980. The regime tried to prevent the growth of anti-Soviet attitudes by strengthening the repressions.

The post-Brezhnev darkness and Gorbachev's *perestroika* (1982-1990).

Persecutions of political and religious freedom especially intensified after Brezhnev's death in 1982, when Юрий Андропов [Yury Andropov] came to power. Andropov had been head of the KGB²⁷ since 1967, and he was responsible for the increased repressions against the dissidents during Brezhnev's rule. Before that, Andropov had been Soviet ambassador to Hungary where he coordinated the crush of the anti-Soviet revolt of 1956. But his rule was short, and after Andropov's death in February 1984, Константин Черненко [Konstantin Chernenko] was elected head of the Communist Party of the USSR. No significant changes happened during his short rule. After the death of Chernenko in March 1985, Михаил Горбачев [Mikhail Gorbachev] became leader of the USSR. At first he attempted to strengthen the regime by accelerating its economy. When these efforts failed, Gorbachev initiated his *perestroika* (Russ. *перестройка*; Eng. *re-structuring*)—that is, a deeper political and economic reform. A part of it was *glasnost* (Russ. *гласность*; Eng. *openness*), which meant liberalisation of the ideological sphere. Against the plans of their designers, these reforms eventually led to the collapse of the whole Communist system in Europe. In the beginning of 1987, the first political prisoners were freed, and gradually signs of revising the state policy towards religion could be seen. The year 1988 proved to be decisive in this respect—the

²⁷ KGB is the transliteration of Russ. КГБ, which is the abbreviation for *Комитет Государственной Безопасности* (Eng. *Committee for State Security*).

Russian Orthodox Church commemorated the millennium of the Christianisation of Russia, and the state permitted its solemn celebration. The Church was allowed to come out into publicity, and the events of the celebration were widely covered by the media. This was seen as a sign that the regime had stopped preventing the people from practising their faith anymore.

1.4.2 A Biographical Sketch of the Ministry Years

The deaconate in Акулово [Akulovo] (1958-1960). Aleksandr Men` was ordained into deaconate on 1 June 1958. He 'was deeply moved by this mystical event, but the ordination did not really mean any turning point in his life. It was just continuation of his way.'²⁸ Thanks to his good reputation and because of the hard situation of the Church, Men` was ordained without the necessary formal Seminary education. However, the same year he entered the Ленинград [Leningrad] Seminary and studied there by correspondence. After the ordination, Men` was sent to work as a deacon in the village of Akulovo, not far from Moscow. He moved there with his wife and his little daughter Елена [Yelena]. Their life in Akulovo was hard: Aleksandr's salary was very low and the living conditions were poor. In addition, his relationships with the local pastor were not easy. In this difficult situation, Men` found the help of Анатолий Ведерников [Anatoly Vedernikov], head-editor of *Журнал Московской Патриархии* [Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate]. Vedernikov provided him with some additional income from publishing articles in the *Journal*. In 1960, Aleksandr

²⁸ *Life*, p. 113.

Men` graduated from the Leningrad Seminary, which met the formal requirements of his preparation for priesthood.

Алабино [Alabino]: the honeymoon of priesthood (1960-1964). Aleksandr

Men` was ordained into priesthood by bishop Стефан Никитин [Stefan Nikitin] on 1 September 1960, and soon he started his ministry in the village church of Alabino. The parish in Alabino was very large as that of the only church in that area. Within a year, Fr Men` was appointed pastor there. He started the renovation of the church, but spent most of his time evangelising and catechising the people. The parish did not suffer much from the destructive parish reform of 1961, because Fr Aleksandr managed to remain actual head of the parish and to protect the system of pastoral care he had established. Soon after they had moved to Alabino, their second child son Михаил [Mikhail] was born. The Alabino period, which was described as Men`s 'honeymoon of the priesthood',²⁹ ended unexpectedly and dramatically. One of the lay servers from his parish was working in a museum, and was suspected of theft. The pastor was accused with collaboration in the theft, too. The church at Alabino and the priest's house were searched. As it was the time of Khrushchev's antireligious campaign, there were efforts of making the case federal. Eventually, however, the necessary evidence against Aleksandr Men` was not found, so the case was closed. Shortly after this incident, another problem followed: Fr Men` was accused of illegal dealings in the renovation of the church. Such practices were commonly accepted in the USSR, but the Soviet regime took advantage of this

²⁹ *Life*, p. 129

particular case as a new chance of harming the reputation of the Church. Fortunately for Men`, the trouble again ended comparatively well: with the end of Khrushchev's antireligious campaign there came a change in the state's policy towards religion, and, finally, the only punishment was his transfer from Alabino to another village.

Тарасовка [Tarasovka] (1964-1970). Aleksandr Men` started work in Tarasovka on 1 September 1964. Although the whole trouble in his previous parish had ended, Maslenikova calls it 'the most serious defeat, the greatest catastrophe in his life.'³⁰ In Alabino Men` had had a beautifully renovated church, where he could establish a well functioning system for pastoral care of numerous people who were coming to the church. He had had a comfortable house near the church for his family. Now he had lost all of this. So the beginning of his Tarasovka period was especially difficult. The salary was so small that Men` had to sell some of his books. The family had to live under poor conditions in the same house with his wife's parents in the village of Cemxos [Semkhoz] some distance away from Tarasovka. Fr Aleksandr had to go to his church by train, and it took him about an hour one way. Eventually his salary was raised, the house was repaired, and life became more bearable. Aleksandr Men` lived in the house in Semkhoz until his death in 1990, and it was there that much of his literary and pastoral work was accomplished. During the Tarasovka period, another conflict between the clergy and the state happened, and Fr Men` was to some degree involved in it. In Alabino, Men` used to meet a small group

³⁰ *Life*, p. 145.

of priests and discuss various pastoral questions to support each other in the ministry. This group decided to react against the destructive parish reform of 1961 by writing an open letter to the Patriarch. At the time of writing and editing the letter, Brezhnev came to power in 1964, and some changes were expected in the state's policy towards the Church. The majority of the group, including Fr Aleksandr, decided to give up the idea of the letter. But two priest members of the group—Gleb Yakunin and Николай Эшлиман [Nikolay Eshliman] wanted to proceed. They signed two letters—one to Patriarch Alexis I, and the other to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Николай Подгорный [Nikolay Podgorny].³¹ The letters helped the spread of information about the oppressive measures against religion in the USSR abroad, and caused some complications in the relationships between the state and the hierarchy. The two priests experienced great persecutions. The regime suspected that the actual author of the letters was Fr Men`, and this worsened his reputation in the eyes of the atheist state. In fact, Men` did not approve the action of his two friends. He admitted the significance of their courage, but had a different vision of his own role as a priest. Maslenikova characterises his attitude thus: 'To achieve rebirth of the destroyed church life, persistent and patient work in parishes was needed for [awakening and] fostering Christian awareness of the people'.³² This was where Men` applied all of his energy and abilities.

³¹ The English translation of the letters is reproduced in: BOURDEAUX, Michael. *Patriarch and Prophets. Persecutions of the Russian Orthodox Church Today*. London: Mowbrays, 1970, pp. 189-223.

³² *Life*, p. 149.

Despite the difficulties, Fr Aleksandr continued his pastoral work rather successfully, and people kept coming for his spiritual direction and other kinds of help. In 1964-1968, he studied at the Moscow Theological Academy by correspondence, and received his degree as Candidate of Science.³³ Half a year after Men's coming to Tarasovka, a new pastor was appointed to the parish—Fr Серафим Голубцов [Serafim Golubtzov]. He was brother of Fr Nikolay Golubtzov, who had been Men's spiritual director until 1961. Unfortunately, Fr Serafim was very different from his brother: he was a Stalinist and a KGB agent. The new pastor wrote complaints about Fr Aleksandr to the Patriarch. In one of them, he accused Men as lacking Marxist materialism.³⁴ This accusation illustrates both the spiritual and the psychological state of this man, who ended up in a psychiatric hospital. The fact that people like Fr Serafim were allowed to continue their priesthood shows the weakness of the Russian Orthodox Church, persecuted by the regime. Men's relationships with his pastor were naturally tense. Finally, after Fr Serafim had written to the KGB, Fr Aleksandr asked his bishop to transfer him to another parish. The bishop granted his consent, but Men's parishioners would not let him go, so he had to serve in Tarasovka for another year.

Новая Деревня [Novaya Derevnja]: increasing persecutions (1970-1986).

Before becoming a regular second priest in Novaya Derevnja in 1970, Fr Men

³³ The title of his thesis was *Elements of Monotheism in Pre-Christian Religions and Philosophy*. Candidate of Science and Doctor of Science were two degrees in the Soviet Union's academic degree system. Candidate of Science is close to today's Ph.D. It was not unusual if someone held this degree for the whole of one's life, for it was not just a transitory phase.

³⁴ That was a typical phrase from the Soviet ideological vocabulary, which could be translated verbatim as 'views without a firm materialistic Marxist foundation' (Russ. *взгляды не стоят на прочном материалистическом марксистском основании*) (*Life*, p. 161).

used to come there to help Fr Григорий Крыжановский [Grigory Krizhanovsky], who was pastor of the parish and needed assistance because of old age. The two priests worked in full agreement, but the relationships with the parishioners were more complicated:

The local 'old women' were divided: one group approved of the kindness, openness and fervour of the young priest, but the others opposed him due to their anti-Semitism.³⁵

The spiritual children of Fr Men` followed him to Novaya Derevnya. Most were from Moscow, and many were of Jewish descent. They did not know the customs of proper behaviour in an Orthodox church very well, so the local parishioners disliked them, and Fr Aleksandr had to be patient to overcome the division. In 1978 Fr Grigory Krizhanovsky died, and Fr Стефан Середний [Stefan Seredny] was appointed new pastor to Novaya Derevnya. Under the influence of anti-Semitic propaganda, he started writing complaints on Fr Men` and forbade him to meet the parishioners in the house near the church. This was during early eighties, when atheism was very aggressive and all evangelisation or catecheses were fiercely persecuted. Therefore, all pastoral work with the parishioners had to move to a rented house in Novaya Derevnya. Unfortunately, Men``s activities there attracted the attention of the KGB. Finally, in 1983, they had to move to still another house. In the spring of 1983, Fr Stefan left the parish of Novaya Derevnya, and a new pastor was appointed. Work with him was easier. However, with Andropov's coming to power in November of 1982, the regime again intensified the persecutions of its ideological opponents. So far, Fr Men` had avoided being arrested. He always took the necessary

³⁵ *Life*, p. 164.

means of precaution in his activities. He avoided involvement in direct political struggle, as he considered that his mission was helping the people with the questions of spiritual nature. Nevertheless, evidence against him was accumulating, and, starting with December 1983, the KGB started regular interrogations of Men'. His parishioners and spiritual children were not always careful enough to conceal his religious activities. Some of them were arrested and, under pressure, they disclosed some important information to the KGB. Material for Men''s conviction was being prepared, and in 1985 he was about to be arrested. Luckily, at that critical moment his bishop Ювеналий [Yuvenaly] interceded, and Men''s detention was avoided. The final attack came in April 1986, when a large article in the newspaper *Труд* [Work] accused several active Orthodox Christians of illegal religious activity. Fr Aleksandr Men' was mentioned among them. But at that time the *perestroika* came, and the political climate in the USSR changed dramatically.

Novaya Derevnnya: religious freedom (1987-1990). The changes brought about by the *perestroika* led to a new phase in Men''s ministry, which was centring on an open proclamation of the Gospel. His last two and a half years (from April 1988 to September 1990), were packed with activities. This is how he described that time himself:

I feel like an arrow, which had been ... kept on a strained bow-string. I have always been trying to do my duty, but the scope was so limited.... But now all of my dreams have come true....³⁶

³⁶ БЫСТРОВА, Ирина [BISTROVA, Irina]. 'Интервью На переломе' ['Interview On the Turning Point']; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru/interview/naperelm.html> [10 July 2003].

His ministry took on new forms, such as articles and interviews in periodicals, as well as public lectures. Besides, he was busy with several large projects, including the founding of the Russian Bible Society, the Open Orthodox University, the educational and charitable association 'Cultural Renaissance'. He was also starting pastoral work with children and parents at a Paediatric Hospital in Moscow, opening a Sunday school, participating in the production of radio programmes for children, and appearing in several TV shows. Besides, he intended to lead a weekly TV programme—a project that was never accomplished because of Men's death. In the period of 1987-1990, he published around 30 articles, largely in secular periodicals. On 19 October 1988, he became the first clergyman in the Soviet history to be asked to give a talk to children at a public school.³⁷ In 1989, Fr Aleksandr Men` was appointed pastor of the Novaya Derevnja parish, and started new construction projects. The number of the parishioners increased due to his growing popularity. At Easter of 1990, Men` preached at a large evangelisation gathering in the Moscow Olympic Stadium. This is how Maslenikova, as an eye-witness, describes this rapid increase of Men's activities:

In April 1988, a new epoch started for Fr Aleksandr. The state changed its attitude towards the Church, and Fr Aleksandr started giving lectures in Moscow club-houses. People were coming in flocks. Journalists were besetting the small house beside the church with requests for talks on the radio or television, as well as for articles in newspapers and journals. Visitors from abroad were coming almost every Sunday: emigrants, correspondents, Church figures. Cinema-people invited him to act or to script religious films....

The number of lectures increased to thirty a month. This went together with very intensive parish work! The parish, which was enormous even before, grew swiftly with the growth of Fr Aleksandr's fame. Long

³⁷ Such event was so unusual for the USSR that the national newspaper *Известия* (*Izvestiya*, Eng. *The News*) told about it in the issue of 21 October 1988.

distances and lack of a car caused additional difficulties. Some of the few parishioners who had cars, sometimes took him to lectures, but this was not always possible.

Still, Father never refused anyone. He was constantly exhausted, but never had any repose.³⁸

The *perestroika* did not go very smoothly, so religious freedom seemed very fragile during late eighties. Aleksandr Men` was anxious to make the most of the political situation for proclaiming the Gospel: 'the rabbit can jump free while the hunters hunt each other'.³⁹ There existed, however, groups of people that disliked the growth of Men`'s influence and the large scope of his activity. Not everyone in the Russian Orthodox Church approved of his ecumenical openness. The anti-Semitic Russian nationalists could never forget his Jewish background. The KGB realised how great an impact Fr Men` had been making on the Soviet population. They felt that the weakening of the regime might help him to escape them. Aleksandr Men` knew about the growing hostility against him, so he was very eager to accomplish as much as possible. He was aware of the closeness of his death, especially during the last week of his life. Early Sunday morning, 9 September 1990, Fr Aleksandr Men` left home for the train station to go to his parish church for the liturgy. On the way, he was hit on the head from the back with an axe. He was losing blood rapidly. He managed to reach his home, but then fell by the door unable to ring the bell. When his wife found him, she called the police and the ambulance, but it was too late. When

³⁸ *Life*, pp. 206-207.

³⁹ БЕЛАВИН, А. А. [BELAVIN, A. A.]. *Четвертая позиция [The Fourth Position]*. Ижевск: Издательский дом "Удмуртский университет", 1999; <http://www.krotov.org/library/b/belavin.html> [12 July 2003]. According to Belavin, it was in the summer of 1986 that Men` thus expressed his views on the political processes in the USSR.

they arrived, Aleksandr Men' was already dead. Several versions of the crime have been investigated, but the criminals were never found. Most of Men''s biographies and commentators indicate the KGB and the anti-Semites as the probable designers of this crime, and Fr Aleksandr is often considered a Christian martyr killed for his powerful testimony of faith.

1.5 A 'Missionary to the Wild Tribe of the Soviet Intelligentsia'⁴⁰

Aleksandr Men''s pastoral work followed one pattern without any significant changes throughout thirty years of his priesthood. One of the reasons for this consistency was the fact that he had formed the concept of his mission very early in life: he had been deliberately preparing for priesthood since he was 12, and, in his words, five years later he could already 'see the main task [of his life] quite clearly'.⁴¹ In the present overview, therefore, Men''s pastoral work will be considered as a whole, without regarding its periods spent in different parishes. The place names will only be mentioned occasionally, to discuss some specific circumstances of his service. Side by side with the ordinary priestly duties, two aspects of his ministry stand out as exceptionally productive. They are parish community formation and spiritual direction (subsection 1.5.1), and writings and lectures (1.5.2).

⁴⁰ BERNBAUM, 'Legacy', op. cit. (2003). Here Bernbaum alludes to an article by АВЕРИНЦЕВ, С. [AVERINTZEV, S.]. 'Миссионер для племени интеллигентов' ['Missionary for the Tribe of Intelligentsia']. In *И было утро. Воспоминания об отце Александре Мене*, сост. ГРИГОРЕНКО-МЕНЬ, Н. Ф., МЕНЬ, П. В., ЖИРМУНСКАЯ, Т. А., СЕРГЕЕВА, М. В. [*When Morning Came. Memories about Fr Aleksandr Men'*, eds. N. F. GRIGORYENKO-MEN', P. V. MEN', T. A. ZHIRMUNSKAYA, M. V. SERGEYEVA], 326. Москва: АО „Вита-центр“, 1992.

⁴¹ МЕНЬ [MEN'], 'Recollections', op. cit. (1996).

1.5.1 Parish Community Formation and Spiritual Direction

The task of forming a Christian community in the parish has always been among Fr Men's highest priorities. His idea of a parish is seen in the following remark:

When I became a priest, I tried to unite my parish, to make it a community, not just an accidental group of people who know very little about each other. I wanted all the members to help one another, to pray together, as well as to study the Scripture and to receive Holy Communion together.⁴²

As a parish priest, Men worked efficiently with people of various backgrounds. The translator of his book *Son of Man* Samuel Brown observes, that 'Individuals as varied as artists, academics, *babushki*, and businessmen have been brought unto Christ under the tutelage of Father Aleksandr.'⁴³ The educated part of the population, however, proved to be the group where Men's pastoral work was particularly effective. Among the numerous reasons for this effectiveness, Men's ability to integrate different cultures and religions, as well as achievements of different sciences into a unified picture of Christian world outlook should be especially emphasised. Another feature that made his pastoral work effective was his exceptional respect for each person. This is how Hamant describes Men's communicational ways:

Even if the meeting was a brief one, even if many people were present, each person always had a moment of true communication, heart to heart. All Fr Alexander's attention was exclusively turned toward the person to whom he was speaking. Fr Alexander saw someone special in each person, whom he loved with special love.⁴⁴

⁴² *Witness*, p. 116. Quoting ВАСИЛЕНКО, Л. И. [VASILENKO, L. I.]. 'Культура, церковное служение и святость' ['Culture, Church Service and Holiness']. In *Aequinox. Сборник памяти о. Александра Меня*, ред. И. Г. ВИШНЕВЕЦКИЙ, Е. Г. РАБИНОВИЧ [Aequinox. *Collection of Memories about Fr Aleksandr Men*], eds. I. G. VISHNEVETZKY, E. G. RABINOVICH], 174. Москва: Carte Blanche, 1991.

⁴³ BROWN, Samuel. 'Translator's Note'. In *Son of Man*, Alexander MEN (transl. Samuel BROWN), 262. Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1998. *Babushki* (Russ. *бабушки*), an informal word to signify grandmotherly women, usually uneducated and living in the country.

⁴⁴ *Witness*, p. 114.

This attitude especially manifested itself in Men's ministry of spiritual direction. He respected the freedom of an individual, and compared his own 'role to that of a midwife who is present only to help the mother give birth herself to her baby'.⁴⁵ His goal was to help a person to come to the right decision independently. This pattern is somewhat contradictory to some current understandings of spiritual direction in the Russian Orthodox Church, where obedience to the director's instructions has always been emphasised, but there is hardly any evidence about Men receiving any criticism for this method of his.⁴⁶

The new converts were Fr Men's special concern. He knew their great needs for spiritual help in the aggressively atheistic surroundings. In most of the places where Men worked, initial support for them was granted by the informal community of his spiritual children. At the end of the sixties in Novaya Derevnya, Men was at last putting into practice his idea of small 'communities'. This began with an informal group of his friends who used to meet in a village house, a part of which had been rented by Fr Aleksandr's mother. He used to bring the new converts to this group for the support of the community. But the number of the people grew so fast that the group became unable to accommodate all those in need. Then Men started the formation of small 'communities', consisting of a

⁴⁵ *Witness*, p. 124. Men learned this pastoral method from Fr Nikolay Golubtzov, who had also been 'a pastor of the newly converted intelligentsia' (*Life*, p. 127). Fr Golubtzov, for example, helped Stalin's daughter Светлана Аллилуева [Svetlana Alliluyeva] in her spiritual searching (see *Witness*, pp. 70-71).

⁴⁶ In his article on the chances of Aleksandr Men's canonisation, Krotov mentions that 'he was accused of needless softness towards those under his pastoral care' (КРОТОВ, Яков [KROTOV, Yakov]. 'Канонизация Александра Меня' ['Aleksandr Men's Canonisation']; http://www.vehi.net/men/krotov.html#_edn1 [7 April 2004]). In the same article Krotov argues that the criticism was unfounded.

leader and 7-12 parishioners. They usually met once a week at a private home or apartment where they prayed and read the Bible.⁴⁷ The meetings were secret to avoid persecutions, but the idea proved fruitful and great numbers of people received help.

1.5.2 Writings and Lectures

Writings. Aleksandr Men' saw his writings as an integral part of his ministry. His aim was to attend to ordinary Soviet citizens in their spiritual quests, so this pastoral care determined both the content and the style of his writings. In an interview not long before his death Men' was saying:

My main priority was pastoral work,... so I did not allow myself to specialise in scientific theology.... The people here primarily need bread for their simple food, so I work in this kind of 'bakery'. Others after me may be making pastry, but my task is to bake bread.⁴⁸

Men's first published works were articles in the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*. In the period of 1959-1966, he published around 40 articles on various theological questions. Some of them became chapters for his future book *Son of Man*. All of Men's books published during his lifetime were issued by the Eastern Christian Centre's publishing house *La Vie avec Dieu* [Жизнь с

⁴⁷ Hamant notes the similarity of these communities to the small groups ('communautes de base') in the Catholic Church, as they are discussed in Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 58 (see *Witness*, p. 119).

⁴⁸ МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN', Aleksandr]. 'Быть Христианином. Интервью 29 июля 1990 г.' ['To Be a Christian. Interview of 29 July 1990']. In *Быть Христианином. Интервью и последняя лекция*. Сост. Марк МАКАРОВ. [To Be a Christian. Interview and the Last Lecture, ed. Mark MAKAROV], 14. Москва: Протестант, 1994. Hereafter quoted as *Interview*. Beside his own writings, Men' also initiated the translation into Russian of the works by some other authors, for example, St Francis De Sales (see *Life*, p. 96) and C. S. Lewis (see 'Между прошлым и будущим. Всегда ли побеждает побежденный? (Беседа с Н. Л. Трауберг о переводной религиозной литературе)' ['The Old and the New: Does the Loser Always Win? (Conversation with N. L. Trauberg about Translated Religious Literature)']; <http://uspenie.chat.ru/oldandnew.htm> [15 May 2004]).

Бором, Life with God] in Brussels, mostly under different pseudonyms, including Эммануил Светлов [Emmanuil Svetlov], Андрей Боголюбов [Andrey Bogol'yubov], and А. Павлов [A. Pavlov]. The manuscripts were taken to the publisher secretly,⁴⁹ and the books were later smuggled back to Russia. It was only after his death that the publication of Men's books started in his motherland.

Aleksandr Men's first book *Son of Man* was published in 1969.⁵⁰ The book was conceived while Men was still a teenager. The idea received its further development through the author's catechetical work at the beginning of his ministry. *Son of Man* is the story of Christ, told to a modern reader who might have strong anti-religious prejudices. Men described the book as 'a historical evangelical (Russ. *евангельское*) narrative without any inventions, based on scientific (textual, archaeological) investigations as well as on the Gospel itself'.⁵¹ *Son of Man* later became Men's most popular volume. His second book *Heaven on Earth* explains the basics of the Orthodox liturgical life. It was first published in 1969, and later appeared in a revised form under the title *The Orthodox Worship: Sacrament, Word, and Image*. During the sixties, Men completed the first five volumes of his six-volume history of religions, published in Brussels in the early 1970s. Due to the urgency of his other works, the final

⁴⁹ Asya Duroff, a Frenchwoman of Russian descent, was the contact person between Men and his publisher in Brussels. She was working at the French embassy in Moscow, so her position helped her to take the manuscripts secretly away from Russia many times.

⁵⁰ According to Hamant, it was published in 1968 (see *Witness*, p. 161). In Krotov's bibliography it is dated 1969 (see КРОТОВ, Яков [KROTOV, Yakov]. 'Александр Мень: библиография' ['Aleksandr Men': Bibliography]; http://www.krotov.org/library/m/menn/bibl_menn.html [20 March 2003]). See Select Bibliography for publication details of all the books mentioned in this section.

⁵¹ *Interview*, p. 14.

volume was published only as late as 1983. The series was named *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life*.

Men` himself saw his writings on the history of religions as closely related to his works aiming at a better understanding of the Bible. In this latter area, his three-volume practical key to the Sacred Scripture *How to Read the Bible* is very important. It introduces the general public to Bible reading by critical application of the achievements of the biblical studies in the 20th century. His smaller volume *The Apocalypse. The Revelation of John the Theologian. A Commentary* serves a similar purpose. Men`s *Isagogics. The Old Testament* is a two-volume introduction to biblical studies in the form of a textbook for seminaries. His most significant work in this area is the three-volume *Dictionary of the Bible*, where Men` presents various authors and tendencies of Scripture studies both in Russia and all over the world throughout the centuries. He saw the *Dictionary of the Bible* as a tool 'for renewing Biblical studies in Russia'.⁵² Men` has also written commentaries on the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the New Testament, which have been included into several Russian editions of the Bible published in Brussels.⁵³ Among Fr Men`s other writings, his *Practical Guide to Prayer* and an album for children *Where Does All This Come from?* should be mentioned. Both are catechetical aids aimed at restoring the Christian mentality of the people

⁵² *Witness*, p. 167.

⁵³ The Bible edition containing Men`s commentaries to the Pentateuch and the Prophets was first published in 1973, and reissued several times. The New Testament edition with Men`s commentaries was first published in 1985. These editions were published in Brussels, but the edition of 1985 did not indicate the place of publication. As Bichkov explains, this was done 'at the request of Fr Aleksandr, because in the early 1980s even the foreign editions of the Sacred Scripture were confiscated' (БЫЧКОВ [BICHKOV], op. cit. (1996)).

growing up in an atheistic environment. Beside the major writings mentioned in this short review, there exist a number of smaller publications by Men`.

Most evaluations of Men`s written works by non-Orthodox critics are very positive. For example, the Anglican bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, in his Foreword to an anthology of English translation of Men`s writings says: 'Alexander Men is gradually being recognized as one of the outstanding Christians of the twentieth century.... He himself was nothing if not Christ-centred and Christ-committed.'⁵⁴ After Men`s death, the Catholic Archbishop of Paris Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger was remembering their meeting in 1989 with great warmth:

I had such a strong impression that the Word we both announced dwelled in his life, more so than in mine, and that his life was inevitably to become the sign of that Word.... I saw Fr. Alexander's life as an offering and as an abandonment to the love of Christ, the source of all his courage.⁵⁵

Samuel Brown, a Mormon, writes:

Men` has been hailed as the apostle to the intelligentsia, an Eastern C. S. Lewis, a profoundly faithful, thoughtful person capable of expressing solutions to difficult problems in a familiar, comprehensible idiom.... The careful footnotes and voluminous references in this work [*Son of Man*] parallel the encyclopedic erudition of its author, confident in several languages, constantly reading, thinking. Yet his scholarly acumen never interfered with simple, wholesome sharing of thoughts and feelings, a rare trait to be found in any book or writer.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ HARRIES, Richard. 'Foreword'. In *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century. The Prophetic Writings of Alexander Men*, eds. Elizabeth ROBERTS, Ann SHUKMAN, xi. New York: Continuum, 1996. On an other occasion, Harries calls Men` 'one of the most outstanding people produced by the Russian Orthodox Church in recent decades' (HARRIES, Richard. 'Foreword'. In *Awake to Life! The Easter Cycle*, Alexander MEN (transl. Marite SAPIETS), [these pages are not numbered in the book]. London: The Bowerdean Press, 1992).

⁵⁵ LUSTIGER, Cardinal Jean-Marie. 'Introduction to the Original French Version'. In *Life*, pp. 211-212. Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1995.

⁵⁶ BROWN, op. cit. (1998), p. 262. In regard to Men`s knowledge of foreign languages, his biographers Yeryomin and Maslenikova note that he was fluent in English and Hebrew.

Also, Men's writings were evaluated positively by numerous Russian Orthodox theologians. For example, this is what Fr Князев [Knyazyov] says in his Introduction to Men's volume *On the Threshold of the New Testament*:

[Aleksandr Men'] is one of the few Orthodox researchers who managed to show both the fundamental acceptability and the spiritual productivity (Russ. *религиозную плодотворность*) both of the methods, and of some findings of the modern biblical science....⁵⁷

Although praised by numerous readers both in Russia and in the West, Men's writings are evaluated negatively by some Russian Orthodox theologians. A larger part of their criticism is directed against Men's ecumenical openness, in particular against his positive view of Catholicism. In this respect, Kurayev plainly states that Men's 'position is unambiguously Catholic.... Aleksandr Men' as a *writer* ... [is] a Uniate, i.e., a Catholic that professes the Catholic doctrine but at the same time appreciates the Orthodox rite'.⁵⁸ Men's ecumenical views continue causing problems after his death, as the Russian Orthodox Church's attitude towards the other Christian denominations remains rather reserved.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ КНЯЗЕВ, Алексей [KNYAZYOV, Aleksey]. 'Предисловие' ['Foreword']. In *На пороге Нового Завета: От эпохи Александра Македонского до проповеди Иоанна Крестителя* [On the Threshold of the New Testament: from Alexander of Macedonia to the Preaching of John the Baptist], СВЕТЛОВ Э. [SVETLOV E., pseudonym of Aleksandr MEN'], 7. Брюссель: Жизнь с Богом, 1983. Fr Knyazyov was a Rector of Theological Department of Institute of St Sergy (Russ. *Богословский факультет Института св. Сергия*) in Paris. Another Russian Orthodox who evaluated Men's legacy very positively is Archbishop Мудьюгин [Mud'yugin]. See, for example: Мудьюгин, Михаил [MUD'YUGIN, Mikhail]. 'Вступительное слово' ['Foreword']. In *Dictionary*, vol. 1, p. 6.

⁵⁸ КУРАЕВ [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1997).

⁵⁹ The official attitude of this Church towards the other Christians, including Catholics, was promulgated by the Jubilee Episcopal Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (Russ. *Юбилейный Архиерейский Собор*) on 13-16 August 2000, in the document 'Основные принципы отношения Русской Православной Церкви к инославию' ['The Main Principles of the Relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church to Non-Orthodox Confessions']; <http://pravoslavie.by.ru/sob/s2000r13.htm> [9 April 2004]. See also an analysis of the theological and practical difficulties encountered by the ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in: HRYNIEWICZ, Wacław. 'Labour and Hope: Fifteen Years of Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue'. *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, vol. 39 no. 4 (1995), 339-360.

Another area of Men's work, which has also received negative evaluation, is biblical studies. Although he never advocated an unconditional acceptance of the methods of biblical criticism developed during the 20th century, his views in this area keep causing disapproval. For instance, an Orthodox author under the pseudonym of протоиерей Сергей Антиминсов [archpriest Sergey Antiminsov] warns his readers in a very critical article on Men's biblical studies:

His [Men's] works contain ideas and statements that contradict the main truths of the Orthodox faith. One of the reasons ... is that Fr Aleksandr has been greatly influenced by the non-Orthodox Western theology—both Catholic and Protestant.⁶⁰

Much of the criticism levelled against Men contains some elements of anti-Semitism. For example, some Orthodox writers are accusing Fr Men of advocating the 'national exclusiveness of the Jewish [Christians]'⁶¹ as superior to the Christians of the other nationalities. Men's writings were never officially

⁶⁰ АНТИМИНСОВ, Сергей [ANTIMINSOV, Sergey]. 'Протоиерей Александр Мень как комментатор Священного Писания' ['Archpriest Aleksandr Men as a Commentator of the Scripture']. In *О богословии протоиерея Александра Менья* [On the Theology of Archpriest Aleksandr Men'], КАРЕЛИН, Ф., АНТИМИНСОВ, С., КУРАЕВ, А. [KARELIN, F., ANTIMINSOV, S., KURAYEV, A.], 21. Житомир: NI-KA, 1999. Orthodox bishop Seraphim Sigrst made a sharp response to Men's criticism in this book (see SIGRIST, Seraphim. 'Aleksandr Men: Current Criticism and Defense. In Response'; <http://home.earthlink.net/~amenpage/99ewmin2.htm#ln%20Response> [10 April 2004]).

⁶¹ КАРЕЛИН, Феликс [KARELIN, Feliks]. 'О домостроительных пределах богоизбранности еврейского народа' ['On the Housebuilding Limits of Divine Election for the Jewish Nation']. In *О богословии протоиерея Александра Менья* [On the Theology of Archpriest Aleksandr Men'], КАРЕЛИН, Ф., АНТИМИНСОВ, С., КУРАЕВ, А. [KARELIN, F., ANTIMINSOV, S., KURAYEV, A.], 16. Житомир: NI-KA, 1999. See also: КУРАЕВ [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1998). Men discusses some aspects of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in: МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN, Aleksandr]. 'Евреи и христианство' ['The Jews and Christianity']. *Вестник русского христианского движения* [Bulletin of Russian Christian Movement], no. 117 (1976); <http://www.krotov.org/library/m/menn/04/00037.html> [7 April 2004], and МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN, Aleksandr]. 'Возможно ли иудеохристианство?' ['Is Judeo-Christianity possible?']. *Континент* [Continent], no. 95 (1998), 255-268; <http://www.krotov.org/library/m/menn/04/00038.html> [8 April 2004]. See also МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN, Aleksandr]. *Отец Александр Мень отвечает на вопросы слушателей*. Сост. Анастасия АНДРЕЕВА [Fr Aleksandr Men Answers the Questions of the Audience. Ed. Anastasiya ANDREEVA]. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Менья, 1999, pp. 256-266. Hereafter quoted as *Answers*. Men indeed maintains that Israel 'received from God ... calling ... [which] remains to the end of history' (*Answers*, p. 260). The position of the Catholic Magisterium is similar (see, e.g., *Lumen Gentium* (Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 1964, 16; hereafter quoted as LG). At the same time Men emphasises that national differences do not play decisive role 'in Christ' (*Answers*, p. 262).

investigated or censured by the Russian Orthodox Church. However, a reserved position of some members of the hierarchy is obvious even in the message of condolence by Patriarch Alexis II for the funeral of Aleksandr Men', where the following statement is found: 'In his theological daring Fr Aleksandr sometimes expressed opinions, which ... [are not] unconditionally shared by the whole [Russian Orthodox] Church.'⁶² On the other hand, Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Yuvenaly on the same occasion calls Aleksandr Men' 'a pastor ... who was uncompromisingly serving the Holy Church of Christ'.⁶³

Similarly to the contents, the style and method of Men''s writings have also been determined by his pastoral purpose—that of helping the Soviet people to discover religion in general and Christianity in particular. Religion was persecuted in the USSR not only by direct political means, but also on the level of ideology. To counteract the influence of the atheist propaganda, Men' uses apologist's style in a number of his books and articles. He is particularly concerned about helping to overcome the wrong preconception in the minds of

⁶² АЛЕКСИЙ, Патриарх Московский и всея Руси [ALEXIS II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia]. 'Письмо Патриарха Московского и всея Руси Алексия после убийства протоиерея Александра Меня' ['Letter of Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexis after the Murder of Archpriest Aleksandr Men']; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru/biogr/slovopat.html> [10 June 2003]. In general, this message of the Patriarch is rather positive.

⁶³ ЮВЕНАЛИЙ, Митрополит Крутицкий и Коломенский [YUVENALY, Metropolitan Krutitzky and Kolomensky]. 'Слово, произнесенное перед отпеванием протоиерея Александра Меня в селе Новая Деревня 11 сентября 1990 года' ['The Message Given before the Burial Service of Aleksandr Men' in the Village of Novaya Derevnja on 11 September 1990']; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru/biogr/juvenl2.html> [10 July 2003]. Metropolitan Yuvenaly is one of the eight permanent members of the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate. He is also The Honorary Curator (Russ. *Почетный попечитель*) of Fr Aleksandr Men' Foundation in Moscow. Keston Institute's journal *Frontier* published a paper from the Institute for the Study of Religion in the former Soviet Union and the Baltic States (Moscow), which describes Metropolitan Yuvenaly, together with another permanent member of the Holy Synod Metropolitan Vladimir, as 'committed liberals' ('The Holy Synod and the Prospects for the Election of a New Patriarch in Russia. An Analysis from the Institute for the Study of Religion in the former Soviet Union and the Baltic States (Moscow)'. *Frontier*, no. 1 (Summer 2003), 15).

his contemporaries about the incompatibility of science and religion. This preconception was universally used by the Soviet official ideology in its attempts to destroy the roots of all religion. Thus, Aleksandr Men` employed his scientific knowledge to communicate to the reader his conviction about faith and reason as allies and not enemies. Bichkov even asserts that 'the principal value of his theology consists in his [successful] attempts to create a synthesis of the contemporary science and the Christian world view.'⁶⁴ With this aim in view, spiritual items in Men`s writings are often shown in a close relationship to science and concrete scientific data.

Another pastoral goal of Men`s writings was to eliminate the cultural barriers between the Russian Orthodox Church and the people interested in religion, but alien to the Orthodox mentality, terminology and life-style because of their atheistic upbringing. Fr Men` attempted to 'inculturate' Christianity and to bring it closer to his numerous contemporaries who were experiencing these problems. His efforts were sometimes criticised by some others in the Russian Orthodox Church who viewed Men`s formulations as compromising some of the Orthodox truths. Therefore, in his reply to a sharp critical review of his book *Son of Man*, Men` explained his purpose—"to write simply, to use the generally accepted language while talking about the things that we [in the Orthodox Church] like to present in a very special 'elevated' and somewhat archaic language".⁶⁵

⁶⁴ БЫЧКОВ [BICHKOV], op. cit. (1996).

⁶⁵ МЕНЬ [MEN`], 'Letter to E. N.', op. cit. (1991), p. 183.

As a writer, Fr Men` attached great significance to the aesthetic looks of his books. Maslenikova notices this trait as already evident even in his early years. While describing his first 'book' entitled *On the Origin of Animals*, written and illustrated by Aleksandr Men` at the age of six, she remarks:

In this first small book, his idea of a book as an indivisible union of word and visual image is already obvious. [Later,] he carefully selected the illustrations for all of his works himself.⁶⁶

Men` strove to provide his books not only with proper factual data, but also with the best possible visual means: scientific and artistic photographs, paintings or drawings. Yeryomin highlights this in his recommendation to the potential publishers of Men``s six-volume history of religions: 'the author's punctilious attitude towards the design of this six-volume [work] should be taken into account. He considered it absolutely necessary to provide these books with rich illustrations'.⁶⁷ The same could be said about Men``s other books as well. The author's taste and his wide knowledge of arts are obvious even with only very modest printing facilities used by his publisher in the seventies and eighties.

Lectures. Aleksandr Men` gave his first public lecture on 11 May 1988 at one of Moscow's educational institutions for the commemoration of the Christianisation of Russia. From that time on until his death, he gave about two hundred lectures on a great variety of topics. Some of his lectures have been grouped into series, while a number of others are on various separate issues. Thematically, Men``s lectures could be divided into three interrelated groups: (1) the religions of the world (in this group, the series 'Мировая духовная культура'

⁶⁶ *Life*, p. 46.

⁶⁷ *Pastor*, p. 448.

['Spiritual Culture of the World'] is the most important); (2) Biblical studies (the most important series here is 'Библия и литература' ['Bible and Literature']); (3) the Church in the world (the most important series here are 'Никео-Царьградский символ' ['The Niceno-Constantinopolitan⁶⁸ Creed'] and 'Русская религиозная философия' ['Russian Philosophy of Religion']). After his death, some of Men's lectures were published, while many more are made available on the Internet in text or phonogram.⁶⁹

Most of the topics of Men's lectures are the same as in his writings, but in the lectures he presented things in an abbreviated and a more simplified form. The abbreviations were caused by time constraints, and the simplification was due to the lecturer's adaptation to the level of the audience. As Yeryomin explains it, 'the intellectual level of the Russian intelligentsia had become so low, that even his literary way of presenting the material seemed too hard to perceive.'⁷⁰ This remark is about Men's six-volume history of religions, but it is true for his other writings as well. This is how Hamant vividly describes Fr Aleksandr's lectures:

He would speak wearing the wide-sleeved riassa and large metallic pectoral cross of an Orthodox priest. His trials had peppered his curly hair and neatly trimmed beard with white, but his face remained young, extraordinarily handsome, and radiated sweetness. In his twinkling black

⁶⁸ The city of Constantinople is called in Russian Царьград [Tzar'grad]. Hence 'Никео-Царьградский символ'.

⁶⁹ Fr Aleksandr Men' Foundation made them available at: 'Лекции' ['Lectures']; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru/lectures/lectures.html> [31 July 2003]. 'Фонотека' ['Recorded Library']; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru/sounds/sounds.html> [31 July 2003]. Beside Men's public lectures given during the last two years of his life, his followers have tape-recorded and made available some of his talks and sermons given before the *perestroika*. See, for example, a collection of Men's sermons given at the end of the 1970s: 'Беседы на "Символ Веры"' ['Talks on the "Symbol of Faith"']; http://www.alexandrmn.ru/books/tso/tso_6.html [13 April 2004].

⁷⁰ ЕРЕМИН, Андрей [YERYOMIN, Andrey]. (9 May 2002) *Fr Aleksandr's Views on the World Religions* [e-mail to Artūras LUKAŠEVIČIUS], [online], available e-mail: artlukas@kaunas.omnitel.net.

eyes both goodness and intelligence could be seen. He spoke in a warm baritone, with some nasal intonations. Without any note or paper, he would move back and forth across the smaller halls, or would walk the length of the stage, carrying a microphone in his hand. His features were ceaselessly in motion, his expressive physiognomy sometimes serious, sometimes lit up by a smile—a smile either tender, or lively, or charming. He always spoke as if he were talking individually to each person.⁷¹

Men's lectures usually took place in conference halls of various educational or industrial organisations in Moscow. Earlier, these halls had been used for political and atheist propaganda, so, humorously, some of them still had Soviet attributes displayed when Fr Aleksandr spoke there. At one lecture, for example, there was a banner across the stage 'Lenin's work will live forever!'⁷² After the lectures, Men' usually spent considerable time answering the questions that came from the audience on pieces of paper. As his listeners had very little or no religious education, the questions varied greatly both in their contents and in the form of wording. Men's answers reveal his wide knowledge, as well as his great flexibility and a sense of humour. Some of the questions, however, used to be hostile, directed against Aleksandr Men' personally, such as: 'You, a Jew, what are you doing in our Orthodox Church?'⁷³ His answers to such questions were always patient and served a powerful witness to the Good News that he was proclaiming.⁷⁴

Similarly to Men's writings, his lectures also received some negative comments from the Russian Orthodox clergy. Most of this criticism is analogous to the

⁷¹ *Witness*, p. 191. *Riassa* (Russ. *ряса*) is cassock.

⁷² *Witness*, p. 192.

⁷³ *Witness*, p. 192.

⁷⁴ See, for example, his reply in *Answers*, p. 263.

negative evaluation of Men's writings as mentioned above. Kurayev, however, makes some sharp comments specifically dealing with Men's lectures and interviews:

When I was reading Fr Aleksandr's lectures I ... often had an impression that ... the lecturer was working on his image. His wish is to have people talking about him as a champion of liberalism, creativity, freedom, tolerance, openness, as a pillar of "modern Christianity".... The lecturer is less concerned that some of his hearers might ... [choose] the destructive way (Russ. *погибельный путь*).... Sometimes a missionary must be able to say 'no!' Fr Men` was not good at articulating this word...⁷⁵

Kurayev supposes that Aleksandr Men's concern with his own image was part of his missionary endeavour:

With the instinct of a populariser Fr Aleksandr sensed this ... [trend towards non-conformism and Westernization], and used a corresponding image. He should not be criticised for this, because it helped to attract a lot of people to Christ.⁷⁶

The problem, according to Kurayev, is that 'sometimes [Men's] sense of proportion failed',⁷⁷ so his adaptation to his listeners led him to compromising the message he was proclaiming. Kurayev considers this a tactical mistake caused by Men's failure of recognising the deep changes that took place in the course of the 1970s and the 1980s:

[Men` thinks] that the Soviet audience cannot help considering the Russian Orthodoxy to be reactionary.... Because of that, he tries to avoid controversies... The Soviet people were like this, when Fr Aleksandr started writing his books.... They became different, however, by the time Fr Aleksandr started giving open lectures....⁷⁸

⁷⁵ КУРАЕВ [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1998).

⁷⁶ КУРАЕВ [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1997).

⁷⁷ КУРАЕВ [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1998).

⁷⁸ КУРАЕВ [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1997).

On the other hand, the non-Russian Orthodox critics, as well as many of the Orthodox writers, evaluate Men's lectures and interviews very positively.⁷⁹

Aleksandr Men's death on 9 September 1990, did not stop his ministry. On the contrary, this tragic event made Men's voice even better heard. During most of his ministry, he had not even served as a pastor, and his pastors were often incapable of appreciating the importance of his work, and had even interfered with it. Now his death was noticed on the highest political levels in the USSR.⁸⁰ It seems to have served as a signal for his books to be published in his homeland at last: in 1991, four separate editions of *Son of Man* by different publishers came out, as well as a number of editions of his other works. A number of Men's lectures were transcribed and published. Also, immediately after his death his books and sermons started to be translated and published in the West. By now, they are available in about ten languages. Men's legacy is now administered mainly by Fr Aleksandr Men' Foundation in Moscow.⁸¹ The

⁷⁹ The non-Russian Orthodox writers have seldom focused specifically on Men's lectures and interviews, which are usually mentioned only in the context of more general considerations of Men's ministry. However, in the cases when they are mentioned, the remarks are very positive as a rule. See, for example: BERNBAUM, John A. 'The Insights of Fr Alexander Men'; <http://home.earthlink.net/~amenpage/bernbaum2.htm> [4 July 2002]; SHUKMAN, op. cit. (1996), pp. 16-17. *Life*, pp. 190-191; SIGRIST, Seraphim Joseph. 'Acts of Faith'. In *Witness*, [these pages are not numbered in the book].

⁸⁰ 'The President of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev expressed his "hearty regret", Boris Yeltsin [Борис Ельцин] called the Supreme Soviet [i.e., the Parliament] of Russia to one minute's silence in remembrance of Fr Aleksandr, and sent a wreath' (Фонд имени протоиерея Александра Меня [Fr Aleksandr Men' Foundation]. 'Биография—по материалам книги Ива Амана "Отец Александр Мень Христов свидетель в наше время"' ['Biography on the Material from the Book by Yves Hamant "Alexander Men: A Witness for Contemporary Russia. A Man For Our Times"']; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru/biogr/biogr.html> [1 August 2003]).

⁸¹ Its address is: Фонд имени протоиерея Александра Меня, Россия, 103009 Москва, Столешников пер., 2 [Father Aleksandr Men' Foundation, Russia, 103009 Moscow, Stoleshnikov lane, 2]; Internet address: Фонд имени протоиерея Александра Меня [Fr Aleksandr Men' Foundation]; <http://www.alexandrmn.ru> [15 February 2003]. Besides this Foundation in Moscow, there is another in Latvia: Международный Благотворительный Фонд

Foundation, as well as several other organisations and Aleksandr Men's numerous friends throughout the world, are continuing his mission.

CHAPTER 2. ALEKSANDR MEN'S WORKS ON THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

2.1 Introduction

An important part of Aleksandr Men's legacy has been devoted to the world's religions. The present chapter aims at providing a general introduction into these works, as a preparation for a more specific analysis of Men's views on this subject in chapters 4-6. His writings on the world's religions are mostly either part of his history of religions, or directly linked to it. Men systematically presents the history of religions in two of his major works. The first is his six-volume history of religions entitled *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life*. Its structure is as follows:¹

Volume I. *The Sources of Religion*.

Volume II. *Magism and Monotheism: Religious Path of Mankind up to the Epoch of the Great Teachers*.

Volume III. *At the Gates of Silence: Spiritual Life of China and India in the Middle of the First Millennium B.C.*

Volume IV. *Dionysus, Logos and Fate: Greek Religion and Philosophy from Colonisation to Alexander*.

Volume V. *The Messengers of the Kingdom of God: Biblical Prophets from Amos to the Restoration (7th-4th cent. B.C.)*.

Volume VI. *On the Threshold of the New Testament: from Alexander of Macedonia to the Preaching of John the Baptist*.

It took Men about twenty years to complete this history of religions. He was working on the first five volumes in the 1960s, i.e., during the first decade of his priesthood. That was a time of his intense parish priesthood in the villages of Alabino and Tarasovka near Moscow. These responsibilities delayed the writing

¹ For full details, see Select Bibliography of this thesis.

of the sixth volume until late 1970s, when he was serving in the village of Novaya Derevnya. Some authors (e.g., Bichkov, Bernbaum, Kurayev) view Men's book *Son of Man* as the seventh volume of his history of religions.² Besides, *Son of Man* has actually been included as the seventh volume in one of the editions of Men's history of religions published in Russia.³ Men himself, however, considered *Son of Man* a separate work.⁴ This is how Maslenikova explains it:

Although it seems to be quite logical to conclude the series with a book about Jesus *Son of Man*, the author himself did not include it [into his history of religions]. He distinguished Christianity from the other world religions as God's response to [man's] search for truth....⁵

The majority of Men's commentators also consider *Son of Man* to be a separate volume. This attitude has been adopted in the present study, too.

Another important source that presents a full picture of Men's view of the history of religions is a series of his eight lectures under the title *Spiritual Culture of the World*.⁶ It includes the following topics:

1. 'The Sources of the World's Spiritual Culture'.
2. 'Spiritual Searches in Asia'.

² See БИЧКОВ [BICHKOV], op. cit. (1996); BERNBAUM, 'Insights', op. cit. (2002). КУРАЕВ [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1997).

³ МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN', Aleksandr]. *История религии. В поисках пути, истины и жизни. Том 7. Сын человеческий [History of Religions. In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. Volume 7. Son of Man]*. Москва: Слово, 1992; <http://www.ozon.ru/context/detail/id/1675856/> [14 June 2005].

⁴ See, for example, *Interview*, p. 14.

⁵ *Life*, p. 199.

⁶ They were published posthumously as a separate volume: МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN', Aleksandr]. *Мировая духовная культура*. Ред. Марина НАСОНОВА, Роза АДАМЯНЦ, Павел МЕНЬ [Spiritual Culture of the World. Eds. Marina NASONOVA, Roza ADAMYANTZ, Pavel MEN']. Москва: Храм Святых бессребреников Космы и Дамияна в Шубине, 2002. Hereafter quoted as *Culture*.

3. 'Spiritual Revolution in the East. China'.
4. 'Brahmanism. Buddhism. Krishnaism'.
5. 'The Pre-Socratic Philosophy'.
6. 'Socrates. Plato. Aristotle'.
7. 'On the Threshold of the New Testament'.
8. 'Christianity'.

These public lectures were given in Moscow during the last period of Men's ministry. As seen from the titles, the main themes of the lectures coincide with those in the six-volume history of religions. However, two significant differences are evident. First, in his lectures Men dwells very shortly on the religion of the Old Testament, which in his books is treated rather extensively.⁷ The reasons for this omission are not clear. The shortage of time does not seem a fit explanation, especially in view of the fact that Men devotes two whole lectures (the fifth and the sixth ones) to the subject of the Greek philosophy. The second difference is that his last lecture is devoted specifically to Christianity, and this somewhat contradicts Men's choice to exclude Christianity from his series *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life*. This difference can probably be explained by the practical and pastoral reasons. As it will be shown below, Men treats Jesus Christ as the centre of the whole history of salvation. Thus, Men's six-volume history of religions could be viewed as a natural path towards his book on Christ *Son of Man*, which makes a separate but not an unrelated

⁷ Besides the fifth volume that deals almost exclusively with the biblical prophets, significant parts of the second and the sixth volumes are also devoted to the religion of the Old Testament (see a review of the main themes in Men's history of religions in 2.4.2). In the lectures, it is only the period from the Maccabean revolt to the birth of Christ that is shortly discussed in the last part of the seventh lecture (see *Culture*, pp. 214-224).

volume. As to the series *Spiritual Culture of the World*, it would not seem practical to distinguish Christianity to an extent of discussing it outside the whole series. In order to stress Christ's central place in the history of religions, however, Men` discusses Christianity in the last lecture of his series, and he explicitly stresses Christ's uniqueness.⁸

The series of lectures *Spiritual Culture of the World* and the six-volume work *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life* reveal the full scope of Men`'s view of the history of religions. Besides, there also exist some supplementary sources. The most noted among them is his article 'On the Problems of the "Axial period". About the Dialogue between Culture and Religion'.⁹ In this analytical article, Men` explains some of the influences that underlie his understanding of the history of religions. Another source of Men`'s views on religions of the world is the compilation entitled *Fr Aleksandr Men` Answers the Questions of the Audience*. The present research will mostly refer to two sections of this book, namely, 'Christianity and the Other Religions', and 'The Person of Jesus Christ'.¹⁰ Men`'s three-volume *Dictionary of the Bible* will also be referred to. In

⁸ See МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. 'Христианство. Лекция 8 сентября 1990 г.' ['Christianity. Lecture of 8 September 1990']. In *Быть Христианином. Интервью и последняя лекция*. Сост. Марк МАКАРОВ [To Be Christian. Interview and the Last Lecture. Ed. Mark MAKAROV], 17-19. Москва: Протестант, 1994. Hereafter quoted as *Christianity*. Men`'s understanding of Christ's uniqueness will be discussed in chapter 4, below. Since the lecture 'Christianity' presents in a summarised form Men`'s main ideas on the relationship between Christianity and the other religions, an English translation of the lecture is included into Appendix 2 of this thesis.

⁹ МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *Трудный путь к диалогу*. Ред. Лидия КОРЕНЕВА, Наталья МАТЯШ, Павел МЕНЬ [A Hard Road towards Dialogue. Eds. Lidiya KORENYOVA, Natal'ya MATYASH, Pavel MEN`]. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2001, pp. 240-282. Hereafter quoted as *Dialogue*.

¹⁰ *Answers*, pp. 249-274, 305-317.

addition, some separate ideas about the world's religions are found scattered in a number of other secondary sources.

2.2 The Main Influences on Men's Understanding of the History of Religions

Aleksandr Men's knowledge of the non-biblical religions comes almost exclusively from his own independent studies of literature. There is no evidence that he could have taken any courses specifically on this subject in Leningrad Seminary or Moscow Theological Academy. Besides, none of the individuals who had influenced Men during his formation years were specialists in this area of expertise.¹¹ On the other hand, he had had some actual contacts with representatives of the non-biblical religions. During his studies in Irkutsk, Men had some casual encounters with Buddhists.¹² As Islam used to be one of the major religions in the former USSR, he must also have met some Muslims. While describing Men's ministry, Bichkov mentions that he 'indulged into a dialogue with representatives of other religions and confessions'.¹³ Those meetings, however, were mostly accidental. Therefore, the main source of his knowledge of the non-biblical religions is books. The bibliographies presented in Men's works and the numerous references found in his texts show that he had had a number of important resources of factual information on the world's religions at his disposal. Maslenikova notes on this point that

¹¹ For the main influences on the formation of Men's world outlook see 1.3.2.

¹² See *Life*, pp. 94, 104-105.

¹³ Бычков [BICHKOV], op. cit. (1996).

while working on his history of religions, Fr Aleksandr was reading unthinkable amounts of literature. He was regularly working in the library of the Moscow Theological Academy, and he used to take the books home.¹⁴

Although, as it will be noted later, Men's access to the most recent literature could not help being limited, most of his commentators acknowledge a high level of his efficiency in the world's religions. Bernbaum, for example, calls him 'a brilliant scholar with a broad grasp of the history of ideas and world religions'.¹⁵ Or, this is what Hamant says about his six-volume history of religions: 'One cannot help but be struck by the magnitude of his knowledge, especially when one considers the conditions under which he worked, without ever interrupting his pastoral activity'.¹⁶ Shukman makes the following remark in reference to Men's volume *At the Gates of Silence*: 'The Chinese specialist, Evgeniya Zavadskaya, one of Fr Alexander's parishioners, acted as consultant for this book and writes appreciatively of his scholarship and profound understanding'.¹⁷ Kurayev, however, expresses a different opinion:

Quite a few critical remarks can be made in reference to Fr Aleksandr's works on the history of religions.... A number of his assertions can be questioned ... from the point of view of religious studies....¹⁸

This criticism, however, mostly remains unspecified. On the whole, as it has been shown in the Introduction, Men's understanding of the world's religions from the position of religious studies remains largely unexamined.

¹⁴ *Life*, p. 200.

¹⁵ BERNBAUM, 'Insights', op. cit. (2002).

¹⁶ *Witness*, p. 164.

¹⁷ SHUKMAN, op. cit. (1996), pp. 21-22.

¹⁸ КУРАЕВ [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1997).

Men's views on the history of religions, as well as his theological position in general, have been influenced by a number of writers. As it was noted in chapter 1, Men was well familiar with patristic literature. Besides, he had been an extensive reader of the Russian philosophers of religion of the 19th-20th centuries, as well as of some modern Western theologians and religious studies scholars. He had also studied the sacred writings of world's religions. All of these sources had to make an impact on Men's understanding of the history of religions in general, as well as on his views on the specific religions. The scope of the present research, however, does not allow a detailed examination of all the influences, so only the most prominent ones are considered here. Men himself explicitly indicates that his understanding of the history of religions was significantly influenced by four thinkers, namely, by two Russian Orthodox philosophers—Vladimir Solovyov and Nikolay Berdyayev, as well as by two Western writers—German philosopher Karl Jaspers and English historian Christopher Dawson.

Vladimir Solovyov. Men considers his own work in the field of the history of religions to be a continuation of the undertaking started about a century earlier by Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900). The famous Russian philosopher had intended to investigate religions of the world in order to show the place of Christianity among them. Although Solovyov had managed to make only a bare sketch of the project, his idea inspired some other Russian Orthodox theologians¹⁹ to continue the investigations in this area. Aleksandr Men sees

¹⁹ Such as A. Введенский [A. Vvedensky], A. Ельчанинов [A. El'chaninov], П. Флоренский [P. Florensky], С. Булгаков [S. Bulgakov], Н. Бердяев [N. Berdyayev] (see МЕНЬ, Александр

himself among the successors of Solovyov's enterprise, too: 'the objective of this [six-volume history] is ... to carry out what Solovyov has entrusted to us as his will for our times.'²⁰ As it has been noted in the previous chapter, of all the Russian Orthodox theologians, it was Solovyov who made the greatest influence on Men'. Men' dedicated the first volume of his history of religions to Solovyov.²¹ Below, it will be shown how Solovyov's notions of 'God-manhood' and 'universal unity' became essential in Men''s concept of the history of religions. At the same time, Men' explicitly rejected some of Solovyov's basic ideas, such as his vision of theocracy and his Sophiology.²² Men' was also very critical of the idea of 'the history that failed' (Russ. *неудавшаяся история*), according to which 'God's truth has been completely defeated in our world'.²³ Men''s commentators also note significant differences between Men' and Solovyov. For example, Vasilenko contrasts Men' to 'Solovyov [who is] a Christian Gnostic'.²⁴ Yeryomin

[MEN', Aleksandr]. *В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. I. Истоки религии [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. I. The Sources of Religion]*. Брюссель: Жизнь с Богом, 1991, p. 9. Hereafter quoted as *Sources*).

²⁰ *Sources*, p. 10.

²¹ The dedication reads: 'This book is dedicated to the blessed memory of the great Christian thinker Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov' (*Sources*, p. 5).

²² See МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN', Aleksandr]. *В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. VI. На пороге Нового Завета: От эпохи Александра Македонского до проповеди Иоанна Крестителя [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. VI. On the Threshold of the New Testament: from Alexander of Macedonia to the Preaching of John the Baptist]*. Брюссель: Жизнь с Богом, 1983, p. 691-692, endnote no. 17. Hereafter quoted as *Threshold*.

²³ *Dialogue*, p. 453. This pessimistic outlook had been adopted by Solovyov shortly before his death. See also *Dialogue*, p. 267; *Sources*, p. 351; МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN', Aleksandr]. *О Христе и Церкви. Беседы и лекции*. Ред. Роза АДАМЯНЦ, Наталья ГРИГОРЕНКО, Марина НАСОНОВА, Павел МЕНЬ [About Christ and the Church. Discussions and Lectures. Eds. Roza ADAMYANTZ, Natal'ya GRIGORYENKO, Marina NASONOVA, Pavel MEN']. Москва: Храм Святых бессребреников Космы и Дамияна в Шубине, 2002, p. 49.

²⁴ ВАСИЛЕНКО [VASILENKO], op. cit. (1991), pp. 170-171. Men' also notes Solovyov's inclination towards Christian Gnosticism (see *Threshold*, p. 691-692, endnote no. 17).

emphasises the key difference between Solovyov as a 'Christian-Platonist' and Men' as a 'Christian-personalist'²⁵ in their views on the history of religions.

Nikolay Berdyayev. Another Russian Orthodox thinker who has significantly influenced Men's understanding of the history of religions was Solovyov's younger contemporary Nikolay Berdyayev (1874-1948). Berdyayev was an ex-Marxist who later became a leading Russian philosopher of Christian existentialism. Men' was impressed by Berdyayev's ideas of *personalism* and *historicism* as expressions of human freedom. *Personalism* (Russ. *персонализм*) here indicates an emphasis on the value and importance of a free human personality, as well as the idea of the personal nature of the Absolute. Men' notes that 'for Berdyayev, the personal basis (Russ. *личностное начало*) means one of the highest features of spirituality'.²⁶ Men' adopts this notion of Berdyayev in his history of religions. That is especially clear in his understanding of the relationship between God and man as found in the Old Testament. Men' refers to this relationship as a *personal* dialogue:

[The essence of] the Old Testament religion is living man in the presence of the living God that does not mean any dissolution in ecstasy or any retreat into some kind of mystical silence. In this religion, man is neither a speechless slave nor a bodiless visionary. Instead, he is a rebellious and conflicting creature of strong will and with a clearly expressed personality. And it is this wholeness of personality and his passionate soul that is brought by man to God's feet.²⁷

²⁵ *Pastor*, p. 469.

²⁶ *Dialogue*, p. 270.

²⁷ МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN', Aleksandr]. *В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. II. Магизм и единобожие: Религиозный путь человечества до эпохи великих учителей [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. II. Magism and Monotheism: Religious Path of Mankind up to the Epoch of the Great Teachers]*. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2001, p. 175. Hereafter quoted as *Magism*.

Historicism (Russ. *учебизм*) means that history is understood as a purposeful development rather than a mere sequence of events. Although this idea is essential for the biblical world view in general, Men` notes that Berdyayev has put a special emphasis on its relationship to the freedom of a human person:

The Greco-Indian consciousness (Russ. *греко-индийское сознание*) is almost irresponsive to the idea of historical progress. It is essentially unhistorical. Berdyayev explains this by pointing out that the extra-biblical world is hardly influenced by the idea of freedom. The Indian mysticism has discovered freedom at the cost of the personality. The Hellenic thought has been captivated by the idea of necessity.²⁸

Men` has managed to combine Berdyayev's emphasis on *historicism* with Solovyov's idea of the *universal unity* in order to work out his own vision of the *universal history of salvation*, which is discussed below.

Karl Jaspers. The idea of the *axial period* developed by German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) has fundamentally influenced Men`'s periodisation of the history of religions.²⁹ According to Jaspers, the axial period encompasses several centuries in the middle of the last millennium B.C. In the spiritual processes of that time Jaspers tried to find solutions for the 20th century crisis of the Western civilisation. Men` agrees with Jaspers as far as the vital importance of these spiritual discoveries for the modern civilisation is concerned. He also shares Jaspers' opinion about the axial period being a very significant turning

²⁸ *Dialogue*, p. 270.

²⁹ Men` points out that Christopher Dawson had defined the idea of the *axial period* twenty years before Jaspers, although he did not use the term (see *Dialogue*, pp. 274-276; also see МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. V. Вестники Царства Божия: Библейские пророки от Амоса до Реставрации (VIII-IV вв. до н.э.) [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. V. The Messengers of the Kingdom of God: Biblical Prophets from Amos to the Restoration (7th-4th cent. B.C.)]. Брюссель: Жизнь с Богом, 1986, p. 497, endnote no. 2. Hereafter quoted as *Messengers*).

point in the history of religions. However, Men` disagrees with Jaspers on two essential points. First, Men` opposes Jaspers'

attempts to rise above the differences in religions. [Jaspers] had been proposing a kind of 'eternal' or 'philosophical' faith able to bring people closer to Deity irrespectively of their concrete religious tradition.³⁰

Men` defines such attempts as a syncretistic approach to religious differences. According to him, this attitude is unable to provide any authentic answers to the spiritual problems of mankind.³¹ Second, Men` thinks that Jaspers has underestimated the significance of Christ: 'Although he calls Christ 'the axis of history', this axis, according to him, is for the Western world only.'³² As it will be discussed in more detail below, Men` believes Christ to be the central figure in the whole history of religions.

Christopher Dawson. Among Western authors, Men` gives his special acknowledgements to English historian Christopher Dawson (1898-1970).³³ In Dawson's philosophy of history, Men` points out the emphasis on 'the role of religion in the formation of the public consciousness and culture in general'.³⁴ According to Dawson, it is the spiritual aspirations that constitute the main moving force behind all the social and material progress. Men` assimilates this attitude into his own understanding of the history of religions. At the beginning of *The Sources of Religion* he states:

³⁰ *Dialogue*, p. 259.

³¹ Men`s position on religious syncretism is considered in more detail in 5.4.

³² *Dialogue*, p. 259. This issue is related to Men`s periodisation of the history of religions and is further discussed in 2.4.1.

³³ See *Sources*, p. 10.

³⁴ *Dialogue*, p. 274.

History provides numerous examples of how ideas and beliefs have been moving the world, how myths, concepts and convictions have changed the face of culture. This fact is especially irrefutable in the sphere of art, but it can also be observed in the development of science.³⁵

Religion has acted as a decisive force in a number of historical movements.... Even fighting against religion means indirect acknowledgement of its significance.³⁶

Throughout all of his history of religions, Men` constantly points out to religion as the basis for the developments of material culture and civilisation in general, and he never speaks of religious processes as independent of their cultural context. Thus, Men`s history of religions may be called history of culture, and, to a certain extent, history of civilisation.

2.3 The Basic Premises of Men`s Approach to the History of Religions

Several premises underlie Men`s understanding of the history of religions. Three of them seem to be most fundamental. Specifically, Men` sees the history of religions as: (1) the universal history of salvation, (2) the history of man`s search for God and truth, and (3) the history of struggle against *Magism*.³⁷

2.3.1 The Universal History of Salvation

History. For Men`, history of religions first of all means *history* in the biblical sense of the word. That is, he does not consider any period of history an accidental combination of chance events. Instead, every segment of historical

³⁵ Sources, p. 35.

³⁶ Sources, p. 13.

³⁷ By *Magism* Men` means a specific world view (see 2.3.3 for a more detailed explanation).

processes is viewed as meaningful, for it has its own direction and purpose.

Men` explicitly considers one of his goals showing this meaning to his readers:

The author's aim ... [is to] help the reader see the history of religions as [a set of] rivers and streams that flow into the ocean of the New Covenant, and not as some cluster of mistakes.³⁸

In line with Berdyayev's notions of *historicism* and *personalism*, Men` sees the history of religions as a history of interactions between personal God and free human persons. He attributes great significance to the role of human personalities. As is rightly noted by Yeryomin, 'for Fr Aleksandr, the history of religion ... is a history of great personalities'.³⁹

History of salvation. Men` sees the history of religions as history of salvation: the whole of history is tending towards salvation, which for Men` means the final realisation of the principle of *God-manhood* (Russ. *Богочеловечество*). In the Russian philosophy of religion, a very special contribution to the development of the concept of *God-manhood* has been made by Solovyov.⁴⁰ He was viewing all world developments—religious, intellectual and cultural—as constituting one whole that tends towards the unity of God and man, termed by him as *God-manhood*.⁴¹ The process culminates in the Incarnation, where God unites

³⁸ *Sources*, p. 11.

³⁹ *Pastor*, p. 444.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., СОЛОВЬЕВ, Владимир [SOLOVYOV, Vladimir]. 'Чтения о богочеловечестве' ['Readings on God-manhood']. In *Чтения о богочеловечестве; Статьи; Стихотворения и поэма; Из 'Трех разговоров...': Краткая повесть об Антихристе*, сост. МУРАТОВ, А. Б. [Readings on God-manhood; Articles; Verses and a Poem; from 'Three Conversations...': A Story about Antichrist, ed. A. B. MURATOV], 32-202. Санкт-Петербург: Художественная литература, 1994; <http://www.philosophy.ru/library/solovev/chteniya.html> [28 July 2004], especially 'Readings Eleven and Twelve' on pp.184-202).

⁴¹ Shukman notes that the English translation of the term *God-manhood* is 'rather clumsy and rather misleading' (SHUKMAN, op. cit. (1996), p. 23). She proposes the following clarification: "Under this term is subsumed the cosmogonic process by which the whole created order is

Himself with the material world in the Person of the *God-man* (Russ. *Богочеловек*) who is Jesus Christ. Men` adopts this idea of *God-manhood* and makes it central for his understanding of the history of religions. The world's religions, according to Men`, constitute separate stages in humankind's journey towards the God-man, who offers salvation to all humankind.⁴² Thus the *history of religions* becomes *history of salvation* that culminates in Christ. This Christocentricity of Men`s history of religions is highlighted in the very title: *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life*. This is a very clear allusion to Jesus Christ who in the Gospel of John calls Himself 'the way, and the truth, and the life'.⁴³

Universal history of salvation. Men`s history of religions may also be called the *universal history of salvation*, for he views all religions and philosophies of the world as participating in this history and representing its separate segments.⁴⁴ The idea of the universality of the history of religions has been largely stimulated by Solovyov's notion of *universal unity* (Russ.

drawn into the divine: all aspects of life, all religions, all art, science, philosophy are illuminated by this fact that the divine is actively at work in the world, drawing all things towards 'divinization', to their intended fulfilment" (*ibid.*).

⁴² Men`s understanding of Christ's role as the Saviour of the world is analysed in 4.4.1, below.

⁴³ *John* 14:6.

⁴⁴ The expression *universal history of salvation* is not used by Men` himself. On the other hand, this phrase has been used by some theologians writing on the Christian understanding of the non-biblical religions, as, for example, by Karl Rahner's student Heinz Robert Schlette (see RUOKANEN, Miikka. *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992, p. 33). This approach has been influenced by the concept of *Heilsgeschichte* (Eng. *salvation history*) in the European theological thought of the 20th century. See, e.g.: FALLON, J. E., KISTNER, H., PETERMAN, E. L. 'Salvation History (Heilsgeschichte)'. In *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. XII, 998-1001. Palatine, IL: Jack Heraty & Associates, 1981.

всеединство),⁴⁵ which is closely related to his understanding of *God-manhood*. Solovyov's *universal unity* signifies his conviction that all things in the world—both material and spiritual—are closely interrelated as parts of one whole. Solovyov opposes his own *universal unity* to what he considers a fragmentary and one-sided view of reality accepted by the philosophy of positivism in the second part of the 19th century. Men' makes this *universal unity* into one of the foundational principles in his own history of religions. He constantly views all spiritual processes as constituting one whole. As it has been noted by Hamant,

[Men's history of religions] did not present different religions separately, one after another in a static way. Instead, they are taken together as a general movement where even the eastern religions participate, each in its own way.⁴⁶

Such inclusion of the non-biblical religions into the history of salvation is generally in line with the current Catholic position on this issue. For example, *Dominus Iesus* affirms that 'the historical figures and positive elements of these [non-biblical] religions may fall *within the divine plan of salvation*.'⁴⁷ A similar assertion is made by John Paul II: 'From the beginning, the Christian Revelation has viewed the spiritual history of man as including, in some way, all religions'.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ It is developed in his doctoral dissertation 'Критика отвлеченных начал' ['Critical Evaluation of Abstract Principles']. Its excerpts can be found at: СОЛОВЬЕВ, Владимир [SOLOVYOV, Vladimir]. 'Критика отвлеченных начал' ['Critical Evaluation of Abstract Principles']. In *Сочинения в 2 т. [Writings in 2 volumes]*, vol. 1, 691-709. Москва: Мысль, 1988; <http://mirosvet.narod.ru/index.html?sol/krit.htm> [12 April 2005]. See also СОЛОВЬЕВ [SOLOVYOV], op. cit. (1994), pp. 32-202.

⁴⁶ *Witness*, p. 164.

⁴⁷ *DI* 14, emphasis added.

⁴⁸ JOHN PAUL II. *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. Ed. Vittorio MESSORI. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, p. 78.

In addition, from Solovyov Men` has adopted a particular attitude that follows from his idea of the *universal unity*, namely, the conviction that every philosophy, religion or idea in itself has something valuable to offer. Men` writes about Solovyov:

Whatever the object of his consideration was—be it socialism [or] teaching on the revolution, the development of the Old Ritualism (Russ. *старообрядчество*) or the destiny of Russia—he always found something valuable there. He realised that nothing in the world could be [totally] fruitless or useless. This reasoning has been marked by what he called the ‘universal unity’ (Russ. *всеединство*).⁴⁹

Following Solovyov as his teacher, Men` also tried to find positive elements in every religion and idea. This attitude has sometimes been met with strong disapproval. For example, Kurayev criticises what he considers Men`’s permissiveness in regard to parapsychological and occult phenomena, non-traditional healing, UFO, astrology, etc. While commenting on Men`’s lecture ‘О духовном целительстве’ [‘On Spiritual Healing’],⁵⁰ Kurayev especially opposes Men`’s message as addressed to an audience that can easily take it for an encouragement of the occult practices:

Fr Aleksandr does not question ... the admissibility of ‘parapsychological’ healing. He does not ask about the source of energy for an extrasensory individual. His attention is focused exceptionally on preaching ‘unselfishness’.... Fr Aleksandr’s reassuring recommendation sounds rather frightening: ‘Your teachers and instructors can tell you about this in more detail’. Unfortunately, this is not addressed either to seminarians or students of a forestry engineering institute. This is addressed to ‘students of the course on methods of non-traditional medicine’, and the instructors

⁴⁹ МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *Русская религиозная философия. Лекции*. Редактор текста Марина НАСОНОВА, ред. Роза АДАМЯНЦ, Анастасия АНДРЕЕВА, Наталья ГРИГОРЕНКО, Павел МЕНЬ [Russian Philosophy of Religion. Lectures. Gen. ed. Marina NASONOVA, eds. Roza ADAMYANTZ, Anastasiya ANDREEVA, Natal'ya GRIGORYENKO, Pavel MEN`]. Москва: Храм Святых бессребреников Космы и Дамияна в Шубине, 2003, p. 28.

⁵⁰ МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *Магия, оккультизм, христианство (из книг, лекции и бесед)*. Сост. Н. ГРИГОРЕНКО, А. КАЛМЫКОВА, П. МЕНЬ [Magic. Occultism. Christianity (Extracts from Books, Lectures and Discussions)]. Eds. N. GRIGORYENKO, A. KALMIKOVA, P. MEN`. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 1996, pp. 149-156.

at these courses are teachers of occultism. It is in this situation that an Orthodox priest reassures his audience: listen to your tutors, the Church does not object that they teach you techniques of 'parapsychology'.⁵¹

Orthodox bishop Sigrist, however, disagrees with Kurayev's criticism. While responding to Kurayev's article, he asserts that Men's attitude is guided by proper pastoral concern:

people found that they could discuss many issues with him without fearing condemnation, so both simple and educated people by the thousands opened their hearts to him, and—much more important—to God. You will look in vain for flying saucers, for example, as a theme of his works or thought, but he would not tell someone who raised the question that 'they are demonic'. It was not his way.⁵²

From the Catholic perspective, Men's open-minded attitude toward the non-biblical religions will be considered in chapters 4-6.

2.3.2 *The History of the Human Search for God and Truth*

Men views the history of religions as history of human search for God and the ultimate truth. This search has been stressed by the choice of the title for the six-volume work—*In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life*. Maslenikova says that this work embodies Men's 'comprehensive (Russ. *целостный*) vision of the history of world religions as man's passionate striving towards God'.⁵³

Men views the very phenomenon of religion as an expression of this striving, and he defines religion as man's attempt to restore his broken relationship with God:

⁵¹ КУРАЕВ, [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1997), quoting: МЕНЬ [MEN'], *Magic. Occultism. Christianity*, op. cit. (1996), p. 152.

⁵² SIGRIST, 'In Response', op. cit. (2004).

⁵³ *Life*, p. 198.

Religion as restoration of the bond between man and God starts in the human history after the Fall.... There would be no need to link what is united; a link always comes as a result of attempting to overcome a rupture.⁵⁴

Men` maintains that in any religion a quest for God is inevitably present, even though it may be intermingled with, or sometimes almost expelled by irrelevant religious elements which come from human striving after lesser goods that tend to become idols. In his last volume of the history of religions Men` states:

Idols endure a long time, but they are not immortal. When they fall, however, the deep and innermost link [with God] does not become destroyed. Man searches again and again.... *The history of religions is history of hopes, losses and of renewed searches.*⁵⁵

According to Men`, authentic Christian attitude towards this search should be that of great respect. That is stated very clearly in one of his lectures: 'In the huge variety of human searching we should *respect* and love the human openness to mystery'.⁵⁶ Kurayev, however, opposes this positive attitude toward all religious searches. He argues that

it has always been part of both the biblical and the Orthodox tradition that the source of pagan *searches* (or errors) is 'the prince of this world', and not ... [the true] God at all, for He never entices the human soul into magic, occult or *Yoga*.⁵⁷

The Catholic understanding, however, is closer to Men``s attitude. For example, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* directly relates world's religions with the search for God:

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself.... In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given

⁵⁴ *Magism*, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁵ *Threshold*, p. 207, emphasis added.

⁵⁶ *Culture*, p. 223, emphasis added.

⁵⁷ КУРАЕВ, [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1997), emphasis added.

expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behaviour: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth.⁵⁸

In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* John Paul II also explicitly highlights the Church's respect for the religious searches found in the non-biblical religions:

The Church's relationship with other religions is dictated by a twofold respect: 'Respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man.'⁵⁹

In addition, Men` maintains that every researcher of the world's religions must be personally committed to seeking and recognising the truth as it is reflected in various religions. This is what he states at the beginning of *The Sources of Religion*:

Religions cannot be properly understood without penetrating into their ... spirit, without ... identifying oneself with their adherents. Only by means of inner empathy, when *we seek the truth* together with the animist, the Buddhist, or the Greek thinker, will we be able to perceive the true dynamics of [those] religions....⁶⁰

Due to this emphasis on the researcher's personal commitment to religious truth, Men`s attitude towards the world's religions is at some variance with the approach widely accepted in religious studies currently. In this latter approach, the researcher attempts to be as objective and as neutral as possible:

Without embracing or rejecting any views as true or false, right or wrong, and best or worse, religious studies scholars attempt, in their scholarship, to be receptive, understanding, and respectful of the interpretations supplied by adherents of religions.⁶¹

⁵⁸ CCC 27-28.

⁵⁹ JOHN PAUL II. Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 1990, 29. Hereafter quoted as *RM*. Quoting *Address to Representatives of Non-Christian Religions*, Madras, February 5, 1986: AAS 78 (1986), 767.

⁶⁰ *Sources*, p. 10, emphasis added.

⁶¹ MATTHEWS, Warren. *World Religions*. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1998, p. 4.

This neutrality of the researcher is supposed to guarantee that he or she is unbiased, and, therefore, scientific, in his or her investigation. The critics of this position, however, insist that this presumably neutral and uncommitted standpoint can easily lead to promoting secular humanism or an agnostic outlook. Thus, there may exist 'the hidden commitments of those whose ideologies masquerade behind slogans of objectivity and impartiality'.⁶² The critics claim that lack of personal response (even if explicitly negative) to religious values, is no asset; on the contrary—it is a flaw in the approach that has been dominating religious studies for decades in the 20th century. Men' produced most of his works on religions of the world in the course of the 1960s and the 1970s. He strongly relied on the contemporary literature from the West, so he was well aware of this approach in religious studies. However, Men's attitude towards world's religions remained different. He stressed the researcher's personal and explicit commitment to religious truth as a necessary prerequisite for proper understanding of religions, for a simple reason that the believers of those religions were also committed to truth and searching for it.

2.3.3 The History of Struggle against Magism

According to Men', the history of religions also represents the history of humankind's struggle against *Magism*.⁶³ *Magism* is one of key concepts in

⁶² HULMES, E[dward]. *Commitment and Neutrality in Religious Education*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979, p. 11.

⁶³ The Russian word *магизм* [*magizm*] is close in its meaning to the word *магия* [*magiya*] (Eng. *magic*). Both of them are widely employed in contemporary Russian secular and theological vocabulary, and are often used synonymously. See, for example: ОСИПОВ, Алексей [OSIPOV, Aleksey]. 'Православие. Словарь. Магизм' ['Orthodoxy. Dictionary. Magism'];

Men's works. It denotes human attempts at controlling the supernatural sphere by means of magical practices. Men understands *Magism* as a specific world view that perceives the universe

as a kind of immense system of links.... Man had to subject himself to the eternal cosmic order.... By knowing its 'laws', however, man could make use of them for his everyday purposes (such as hunting, war, agriculture, etc.) with the help of magic.⁶⁴

According to Men, the key feature of *Magism* consists in the belief that all processes in the universe—both physical and spiritual—are determined by the law of causality: 'Finding the key, the right word or action, seems to be enough for putting things into man's hands.'⁶⁵ In *Magism*, ritual becomes the main means of subjecting spiritual forces towards the desired result. Men sees *Magism* as being rooted in man's sinful attempt of controlling both the material and the spiritual worlds in an autonomous self-assertion. He supposes that this negative tendency has begun with the Fall of man:

Man's desire "to be like God" has separated him from the very Source of Life and turned him into a slave of demons and elements. This ... is what has nurtured magical world outlook.⁶⁶

Men stresses that *Magism* is not a religion in itself, but it can exist as a part of any religion. He even opposes *Magism* and religion: 'Although ... *Magism* has often been infiltrated into religious consciousness (Russ. *религиозное*

<http://www.pravoslavie.by/sootc.asp?id=5592&Session=100> [7 April 2006]; *Известия*, архив за 19.10.05 (*Izvestiya* [The News] archive of 19 October 2005). 'Демократические опыты столетней давности' ['Hundred Years Old Democratic Experiences']; <http://main.izvestia.ru/comment/19-10-05/article2901936> [7 April 2006]. Men uses *magism* and *magiya* as closely related but not synonymous. He invests the word *Magism* with specific meaning, namely, in his works it is a term to denote a particular world view. This is signified in this thesis by the capitalisation and italicisation of the word.

⁶⁴ *Dialogue*, p. 244.

⁶⁵ *Magism*, p. 79. In his *Dictionary*, Men states on the same issue: 'At the heart of *Magism* there lies an idea of determinacy, which encompasses every existing thing' (*Dictionary*, vol. 2, p. 154).

⁶⁶ *Magism*, p. 12.

сознание), it is essentially antagonistic to religion.⁶⁷ According to Men`, *Magism* always influences religion destructively:

magic has always existed side by side with various religious systems, and its *ritualistic determinism* has been poisoning them.

Magism introduces blind and nearly maniacal trusting in the omnipotence of rituals and spells into religion. The spiritual sphere is being invaded by a dead causality. Man's attitude towards ... [the Deity] becomes deprived of all live religious feeling and mystical thirst.⁶⁸

According to Men`, the animosity between *Magism* on the one hand, and the 'live religious feeling and mystical thirst' on the other, has been going on throughout history. He says, for example, that in the middle of the last millennium B.C. 'the new spiritual searches ... [led] to a revolt against the tyranny of *Magism*'.⁶⁹ Yeryomin notes that for Men`, 'the essence of the drama of [the history of] religions consists precisely in the conflict between the magical world outlook and the true faith'.⁷⁰ This position of Men` turns the history of religions into a history of struggle against *Magism*.

2.4 The Arrangement of Material in Men`s Six-Volume History of Religions

2.4.1 Periodisation of the History of Religions

The arrangement of material in Men`s six-volume work is determined primarily by his choice of the periodisation of the history of religions. In this respect Men` has been influenced by Jaspers and Dawson first of all. Men` adopted their view about some crucially important changes occurring in the history of religions in

⁶⁷ *Dialogue*, pp. 135-6.

⁶⁸ *Magism*, p. 79.

⁶⁹ *Sources*, p. 260.

⁷⁰ *Pastor*, p. 453. Yeryomin explains that by 'true faith' he means 'the currents of dynamic spirituality that are compatible with worship of and reverence before the Highest [Deity]' (*ibid.*).

the middle of the last millennium B.C. Men` accepts Jaspers' definition of this time as the *axial period*, and places its descriptions at the centre of his *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life*. Men` also calls the axial period 'the era of the great teachers',⁷¹ thus stressing the significance of the great religious founders and reformers of that time, such as Buddha,⁷² Confucius, Zoroaster, the biblical prophets, and the Greek philosophers. According to Jaspers, the axial period started in 9th cent. B.C., and ended two centuries before the coming of Christ. In one of his analytical articles Men` criticises Jaspers for excluding Christ from the axial period, and advocates its extension to the middle of the 1st cent. A.D.⁷³ According to Men`, the view taken by Jaspers attaches only secondary importance to Christ. At the same time, in his own history of religions, Men` essentially adopts the time limits set by Jaspers. This inconsistency can be explained by Men`'s view of Christ's revelation as superseding all importance of the axial period. Men` appreciates the spiritual insights made at the time, but he also stresses their limitations and problems. These problems, according to Men`, became especially evident during the last three centuries B.C. Thus Men` views the axial period as a closed cycle, which started in the beginning of the

⁷¹ *Culture*, p. 65. Men` does not explain why he chose this term; he only mentions its usage in some other religions, namely, in Buddhism and theosophy (see МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. III. У врат молчания: Духовная жизнь Китая и Индии в середине первого тысячелетия до нашей эры* [*In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. III. At the Gates of Silence: Spiritual Life of China and India in the Middle of the First Millennium B.C.*]. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2002, pp. 233 and 252. Hereafter quoted as *Gates*). Currently the term 'great teachers' is widely used in the Russian theosophical literature in reference to great variety of individuals. It is possible that Men` adopted this term from there, and applied it to the main religious leaders of the 'axial period'.

⁷² The term *Buddha* meaning 'enlightened one' or 'awakened one' is a title awarded to Prince Siddhartha Gautama (Sanskrit), or Gotama (Pali). According to the Buddhist belief, there are many Buddhas, so this term could be used with the articles 'a' or 'the'. Since no other Buddha besides Siddhartha Gautama is considered in this thesis, he will be referred to as 'Buddha' here, without any article.

⁷³ See *Dialogue*, pp. 246-247.

last millennium B.C., made some significant spiritual insights, and ended in crisis five centuries later. By this interpretation, Men` highlights his belief that even the greatest spiritual achievements of the axial period had not been able to satisfy the deep aspirations of man.⁷⁴ According to Men`, the spiritual crisis was overcome only when Jesus of Nazareth brought the radically new stage into the history of religions. Therefore, Men` himself also excludes Christ from the axial period, but for quite the opposite reason than Jaspers does. Specifically, Men` regards Christ's revelation as surpassing in its importance all the achievements of the axial period.

Men` uses the axial period and the coming of Christ as two principal points of reference for organising the whole history of religions into four stages.⁷⁵ All religions that preceded the axial period are viewed by him as constituting the *first* stage of the history of religions. The main feature of this stage is the domination of *Magism*. Men` adopts Dawson's opinion that these religions had a strong impact on the axial period that followed later. In the first stage Men` makes a further subdivision and separates the prehistoric religions from those of the civilisations of the 4th-2nd cent. B.C. He calls the earlier period 'the night of *Magism*', while the latter period, according to him, represents an unsuccessful attempt to get free from the magical world outlook. The axial period stands for the *second* stage in Men``s history of religions. According to him, it started with

⁷⁴ A detailed analysis of Men``s view of teachings and practices of non-biblical religions, including those of the axial period, is given in chapter 5 of this thesis.

⁷⁵ Besides Jaspers and Dawson, Men``s view of periodisation of the history of religions was also influenced by Solovyov. Men``s comments on Solovyov's understanding of the history of religions show some correspondence between his view of the subject and that of his teacher (see *Dialogue*, pp. 265-267).

the activity of the Israelite prophet Elijah in the 9th cent. B.C., and ended with the establishment of the empire of Alexander the Great in the 4th cent. B.C. Men` maintains that the axial period defeated the reign of the magical world outlook, and 'conclusively determined the ways of the pre-Christian mankind'.⁷⁶ The *third* stage in Men`'s history of religions is the shortest—it encompasses three and a half centuries between the end of the axial period and the beginning of the public ministry of Christ. According to Men`, the characteristic feature of this stage is relative absence of new religious ideas. It is a time of further development for the religions of the axial period, and also for an intensification of the interchange between them. The *fourth* and the final stage in the history of religions, according to Men`, was inaugurated by Jesus Christ. Men` views Christ's revelation as the ultimate truth that cannot be superseded in the future.

2.4.2 The Main Themes in Men`'s Six-Volume History

In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life encompasses the first three stages of the history of religions. Men` places three volumes (nos. 3-5) that describe the axial period at the centre of this work. On the words of Yeryomin, these books comprise 'the inner cycle of the six-volume [history]'.⁷⁷ The preceding two volumes are playing an introductory role. Volume 1, as it will be shown below, is not, for the most part, directly concerned with the history of religions at all. Volume 2 describes mankind's religions before the axial period. The series is concluded with volume 6, which describes the third stage, i.e., religious developments between the end of the axial period and the public ministry of

⁷⁶ Gates, p. 7.

⁷⁷ Pastor, p. 470.

Christ. Following here is a short review of the main themes of Men's history of religions.

Volume 1. *The Sources of Religion*. Although Men makes this book into the first volume of his history of religions, it is mainly concerned with issues other than history of religions. It discusses a variety of metaphysical and spiritual questions in an attempt to oppose atheistic propaganda. As Yeryomin points out, Men first of all had

to establish a relationship with his prospective readers on the level of the language and terminology. [This is because] his readership consisted of nonbelievers ... who had adopted patterns of atheistic education since their school-days.⁷⁸

One of the main purposes in this volume is to show complementarity between reason and faith. Men directly discusses the relationship between science and religion, and quotes famous scientists to demonstrate their personal religious beliefs. The ten chapters that comprise this volume are organised into three parts.⁷⁹ Part 1, 'The Nature of the Faith', starts with pointing out at the universality of the phenomenon of religion in human history, and then it concentrates on various epistemological issues related to religion. Part 2, which is entitled 'Man in the Universe', focuses on some topics of biblical anthropology. Men explains the relationship between the story of creation and the theory of evolution. The author's special concern here is to encourage the reader to believe in the immortality of the human soul. In part 3, 'Facing the One Who Is',

⁷⁸ *Pastor*, p. 448.

⁷⁹ The text in Men's history of religions is divided into parts and, further, into chapters. The latter are numbered in continuous order (e.g., in the volume *The Sources of Religion*, part one includes chapters 1-4, part two—chapters 5-7, part three—chapters 8-10).

Men` discusses various aspects of the biblical understanding of human sinfulness. The last chapter of this part, entitled 'At the Sources of Religion', belongs to the history of religions in the proper sense of the word. Here, Men` reviews several theories of the origin of religions, and gives his argumentation on the oldest religion of mankind being monotheistic. He also discusses some other historical and anthropological problems related to research on the prehistoric religions.

Volume 2. *Magism and Monotheism*. This volume covers the first stage of the history of religions, namely, the prehistoric religions and the religions of some early civilisations before the axial period. The twenty-four chapters that comprise this volume are organised into four parts. In part 1, entitled 'The Prehistoric World', Men` describes some general aspects of the prehistoric religions and illustrates them by numerous examples from concrete prehistoric cultures. Men` maintains that primitive monotheism had gradually been pushed out because of the growing importance of minor deities, and eventually it degenerated into polytheism. Men` describes in detail such phenomena as the cult of mother goddess,⁸⁰ totemism, fetishism, shamanism, etc. The final chapter in this part includes a lengthy analysis of *Magism*. According to Men`, this world view had been predominant throughout a very long period of human history—from the extinction of the primitive monotheism till the 4th millennium B.C. Part 2, 'The First Civilisations', describes Egypt and Mesopotamia in the period of the 4th-2nd millennia B.C. Men` views the rise of these civilisations as mankind's attempt to

⁸⁰ Although sometimes Men` gives examples of different names of this deity among the nations of the world (like *Ma* and *Astarte*), he mostly uses generalisations of which the title *mother goddess* (Russ. *Богиня-Мать*) is the most frequent.

become free from *Magism*: 'the dormant spiritual forces (Russ. дремлющие силы) were making their first attempt towards liberation.'⁸¹ According to Men`, the attempt had failed, so *Magism* survived as the dominating world view in the early civilisations. Part 3, 'The East and the West in the Second Millennium B.C.', describes the religious developments in some of the cultures of that period. The first two chapters are devoted to the religion of Aryans before and during their conquest of India. Men` maintains that elements of primitive monotheism in the Aryan religion had gradually been pushed out by the growth of polytheism because of the influence of the local Indian religions. The next two chapters describe Abraham and the other patriarchs in the context of Mesopotamian, Canaanite and Egyptian cultures. Having told the story of Israel's moving to Egypt, Men` devotes two further chapters to the personality and religious reforms of pharaoh Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton). The three final chapters in part 3 portray the Greek culture and its predecessor—the Minoan civilisation during the 2nd millennium B.C. Part 4, 'The People of the Covenant', shows Israel from Exodus to the division of the Israelite kingdom in the 9th cent. B.C. Men` describes the activities of Moses and the subsequent conquest of Canaan in the context of fierce struggle against Israel's inclination towards *Magism*. According to Men`, this struggle continued throughout the period of the united kingdom of Israel. The part ends with portraying the prophet Elijah, who, according to Men`, belongs to the axial period already. Men` highlights the universality of the changes that were taking place at that time:

Neither Elijah, nor the prophets succeeding him ... can be viewed as an isolated phenomenon. At this time the whole of mankind underwent a kind

⁸¹ *Magism*, p. 87.

of waking up after magical slumber, and was preparing to get free from the power of demons that had been encompassing the world. The authors of the Upanishads and Buddha, Lao-tzu and Zoroaster, Anaxagoras and Socrates, as well as Amos and Isaiah were getting ready to open new ways of knowing God....⁸²

Volume 3. *At the Gates of Silence.* This volume is devoted to the religious developments in China and India in the first half of the last millennium B.C. The sixteen chapters of the volume are organised into three parts. Part 1, 'The Chinese Philosophy', starts with describing China at the beginning of the last millennium B.C. Men` emphasises the conservatism of the Chinese society and its isolation from the remaining world. This isolation, however, did not prevent it from experiencing the religious processes typical to the other civilisations at that time. In the 6th century B.C. China encountered the impact of the oncoming axial period. While describing this period in China, Men` focuses on two philosophers—Lao-tzu and Confucius. Men` attaches great importance to Lao-tzu's notion of Tao as an indefinable source of all being and the ultimate goodness. Confucius, contrary to Lao-tzu, is portrayed by Men` as essentially indifferent to the supernatural sphere or mystical experiences. He was mostly concerned with seeking the political and social stability of his country. China, as Men` concludes,

put forward two very opposite solutions to the problem of life. On the one hand, through the person of Lao-tzu it was proclaiming the mystery of the Supreme Being to the world and calling it into mystical contemplation. On the other hand, through the person of Confucius it was attaching a highest value to earthly existence and saw salvation in stable social order.⁸³

⁸² *Magism*, p. 472.

⁸³ *Gates*, p. 59.

Part 2 is entitled 'India from Brahmanism to Buddha'. Men` begins by describing the growth of *Magism* as the context for the sacred writings of the Upanishads. He presents a detailed analysis of their teachings on the Absolute, on cosmogony and on the value and purpose of the human life. When showing the importance of the philosophical insights of the Upanishads, Men` stresses that their achievements had been accessible to a very small part of the Indian society only, while the majority remained under the prevailing influence of crude polytheism and superstitions. Men` devotes a whole chapter to the Bhagavadgita, and he especially emphasises the significance of its teaching on *bhakti* as personal devotion to a deity. Part 3, 'Life and Teaching of Buddha Gautama', occupies the greater part of the volume. Men` presents a detailed description of the spiritual searches of Buddha, as well as of his missionary activity. However, the lengthiest sections of the text are devoted to the analysis of Buddha's teaching. Men` highlights Buddha's avoidance of metaphysical questions, as well as his concentration on the ultimate relief from suffering. He gives a detailed analysis of Buddha's four noble truths, his noble eightfold path, and the concept of *nirvana*. He also discusses the practical issues, such as Buddha's attitude toward castes and popular beliefs. Men` describes in detail the organisation of *sangha* and its role in the spread of Buddhism. In the final chapter of volume 3 Men` studies the development of Buddhism after Buddha's death.

Volume 4. Dionysus, Logos and Fate. This volume is devoted to the Greek philosophy and religion of the axial period. It includes 25 chapters and is divided into six parts. Part 1, 'The Twilight of Olympus, and the Greek Mysticism',

speaks of Greek religions in the period of the 9th-6th centuries B.C. In the political context of Greece at that period, Men` describes religious teachings and practices related to several gods such as Apollo, Dionysus, Orpheus, and Demeter. The remaining five parts of this volume are mainly devoted to Greek philosophers. According to Men`, the philosophers must necessarily be discussed as part of the history of religions, because

the main goal of the Greek philosophy was searching for God.... The intellectual eyes of the greatest minds of antiquity were directed towards Him as the Ultimate Reality. It fell to their lot in Greece to play the role of the priests and the prophets....⁸⁴

Part 2 is entitled 'God and Nature. The Philosophers of Nature'. It describes the life and teachings of such pre-Socratic philosophers as Pythagoras, Thales of Miletus, Anaximander of Miletus, Xenophanes of Colophon, Parmenides, Heracleitus, and Anaxagoras. Part 3, 'At the Crossroads', considers the works of the famous Greek playwrights Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides. Their writings are viewed as an attempt to answer the ultimate questions, which, according to Men`, are necessarily related to religion. Into this part Men` has also included chapters on Democritus and the Sophists. The remaining three parts of the volume are respectively entitled, 'Socrates', 'Plato', and 'Aristotle and the End of the Old Hellas'. Men` presents a detailed description of the lives and teachings of the three great philosophers, as well as of the cultural and political situation in Greece at that time. Part 6 ends with a chapter devoted to Alexander the Great, the famous pupil of Aristotle.

⁸⁴ МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN`, Aleksandr]. *В поисках Пути, Истины и Жизни. IV. Дионис, Логос, Судьба: Греческая религия и философия от эпохи колонизации до Александра [In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life. IV. Dionysus, Logos and Fate: Greek Religion and Philosophy from Colonisation to Alexander]*. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 2002, pp. 90-91. Hereafter quoted as *Dionysus*.

Volume 5. *The Messengers of the Kingdom of God*. The main heroes of this volume are Israel's prophets of the 9th-5th cent. B.C. For the dynamic narrative of this volume, Yeryomin calls it 'one of the best from the literary point of view'.⁸⁵ The twenty-two chapters of this volume are divided into two parts. Part 1, 'Before the Exile', covers Israel's history from prophet Elisha to the beginning of the Babylonian exile. While focusing on the prophets, Men` tells the history of Israel. The first three chapters are about three great prophets of the Northern Kingdom of Israel—Elisha, Amos, and Hosea. Men` depicts their efforts towards renewing the religious life of their contemporaries. Most of the remaining chapters of part 1 speak about the teachings and the activity of two great prophets of the Southern Kingdom of Judah—Isaiah and Jeremiah. In this context Men` depicts other prophets, too, namely Micah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk. A separate chapter is devoted to the beginning of the ministry of prophet Ezekiel. Part 2 of the volume is entitled 'Captivity and Restoration'. It starts with describing Ezekiel among the Jewish exiles in Babylonia. This part also deals with Deutero-Isaiah, whom Men` calls 'evangelist of the Old Testament'.⁸⁶ Men` stresses the vital role of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah in helping the Jewish community with their theological and national problems during the Babylonian exile. While showing the rise of Persia in the 6th cent. B.C., Men` devotes a whole chapter to the Iranian prophet Zoroaster. Men` points out his unique closeness to the biblical prophets, but at the same time he indicates essential differences between them and the Iranian prophet. The concluding three chapters in the volume portray the Jewish community that returned from

⁸⁵ *Pastor*, p. 470.

⁸⁶ *Messengers*, p. 339.

Babylon. Beside Deutero-Isaiah, the other main personages of these chapters are Nehemiah and Ezra, as well as prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Volume 6. On the Threshold of the New Testament. This is the lengthiest volume in Men's history of religions. It deals with the three and a half centuries before the public ministry of Jesus Christ. According to Men, the essential feature of this time is an intensification of interchanges among religions. In his words, 'That was a time of imitators, popularisers and missionaries.'⁸⁷ In this volume Men reviews religious, cultural, and political changes in the countries described in his previous volumes. The volume consists of thirty-three chapters which are organised into six parts. Part 1, 'Buddhism, Yoga, and Hinduism', is about India. Men starts by devoting a whole chapter to Emperor Asoka of the Mauryan dynasty. The next two chapters show Yoga as a human attempt towards liberation. Men gives a detailed analysis of the system described by Indian guru Patanjali in the famous reference book *Yoga-sutras*. The part ends with a study on Hinduism, which pushed Buddhism away from India in the course of the 2nd cent. B.C. Part 2, 'The Greek Thought', portrays the Hellenistic world. Men deals with the main philosophical schools of that time, namely the Epicureans, the Sceptics, the Cynics, and the Stoics. Parts 3 and 4 are entitled respectively, 'Sages of the Old Testament' and 'Judaism and Hellenism'. They describe Israel's encounter with the Hellenistic culture. Men shows the developments of the Jewish thought of the period as reflected in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament. Part 5, 'Rome, the Greeks, and the East', starts

⁸⁷ *Threshold*, p. 13.

with a short review of the history of the Latin people, and continues with the developments of Hellenism in the Roman world. The part ends with describing Rome in the last century B.C. Part 6, entitled 'The Threshold', depicts the political and religious life of Israel under the Roman occupation. Men` presents a detailed description of Jesus' youth in the context of Israel's life at that time. The two final chapters of this part are devoted to Philo of Alexandria and John the Baptist. At the end of this volume, Men` places a chapter entitled 'The New Era and New Struggle (Instead of an Epilogue)', which concludes the six-volume history of religions. Here Men` emphasises the coming of Christ as the culmination of the whole history of religions. This history now assumes an essentially new character due to the spread of the Gospel. In this chapter Men` presents some of his key ideas on the relationship between Christianity and the other religions. He also gives a brief explanation of his views on the history of the Church as a continuous struggle for the implementation of Christ's Gospel.

Some concluding remarks on the contents of Men`s history of religions. Like any other author of a historical account, Men` has been selective about which facts should be included into his history of religions, and which are to be left aside. As seen from the above review, Men` focuses on the religions of the last two millennia B.C. He does not dwell on separate religions of earlier times, which are mostly discussed as a group only, under the general term of *Magism*.⁸⁸ Men` includes into his history of religions most of the major world religions of the last millennium B.C., but he is very selective when he chooses the extent for

⁸⁸ With the exception of the religions of Egypt and Mesopotamia of 4th-3rd millennia B.C., which are considered separately (see *Magism*, pp. 85-138).

describing particular religions. Therefore, some of the religions are barely mentioned, while some others are discussed in detail. This disproportion is seen, for example, in Men's analysis of Buddhism and Jainism. He calls Jainism 'the twin brother of Buddhism',⁸⁹ but the amount of Men's text devoted to these two is very different. Buddhism is discussed in more than one hundred pages, while Jainism takes about two pages only.⁹⁰ This and similar selectiveness could be caused by Men's limited access to the sources of information. Kurayev sees it as a significant deficiency of Men's history of religions:

One of the most serious shortcomings is his lack of attention to ... Ancient Egypt and the Near East in general... But this is not Fr Aleksandr's fault. Most of the sources available to him had been published before the [1917] revolution, and the world of Ancient East (Sumer, Babylon) was discovered as late as the middle of the 20th century only.⁹¹

This remark is only partially correct, however. It is evident from Men's bibliography that he was using important new sources beside the older publications. The idea of the axial period, for example, has been adopted from Jaspers' book *Vom Ursprung und Zeit der Geschichte* (the English translation is entitled *The Origin and Goal of History*) published as late as 1949.⁹² On the other hand, the sources available to Men were not unlimited indeed. In Men's biography Hamant mentions 'difficulty in acquiring foreign books, especially the

⁸⁹ Gates, p. 199.

⁹⁰ Buddhism is described in Gates, pp. 133-238, and *Threshold*, pp. 16-38; Jainism is described in Gates, pp. 122-124.

⁹¹ КУРАЕВ, [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1997).

⁹² To mention just a few other examples: Mircea ELIADE's *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (1965) and *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1965); the multivolume work of Wilhelm SCHMIDT *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee [The Origin of the Idea of God]* (1912-1955); R. BROWN, J. A. FITZMYER, R. E. MURPHY (eds.). *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, vol. I-II (1968); S. N. KRAMER (ed). *Mythologies of the Ancient World* (1961); Pierre Teilhard de CHARDIN. *The Phenomenon of Man* (1955).

most recent ones'.⁹³ Another reason for Men's selectiveness could be the pastoral purpose of his writings. He seems to focus intentionally on those aspects of the history of religions that are of greater pastoral concern for him as a Russian Orthodox priest. Thus, he concentrates on Buddhism much more than on Jainism, as the former is much more known and popular in Russia. Similarly, Men presents a detailed critical analysis of Democritus, as this author used to be interpreted by the atheistic propaganda as one of its supporters. Some other religions are excluded only because Men concludes his history of religions with Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, this seems a significant limitation precisely from the pastoral point of view, as some of these religions—like Islam and the theosophical movement—were making quite a strong impact on Men's readers.⁹⁴ On the other hand, Men often mentions the religions originating after Christ in his other works.⁹⁵

2.5 The Methods and the Style of Men's Six-Volume History of Religions

As it has been stated in chapter 1, Men viewed most of his writings as pastoral tools for helping his countrymen in their spiritual needs. The primary goal of the six-volume history of religions is also pastoral. On the words of Men, his purpose is to make 'meeting our remote predecessors helpful for our contemporaries in their search for the Way, the Truth and the Life'.⁹⁶ Men

⁹³ *Witness*, p. 164.

⁹⁴ Islam may be thought an especially significant omission, given the fact that there were so many Muslims in the USSR.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., *Answers*, pp. 249-274, 305-317; *Interview*, pp. 3-6.

⁹⁶ *Magism*, p. 16.

believes that bringing his countrymen to Christ requires much more than merely initiating them into the truths of Christian faith and the Christian way of life. According to him, 'a new look at the Gospel [is necessary], so that it can be viewed in the wide perspective of the world'.⁹⁷ In this, Men' follows the idea of Solovyov, who has plainly stated that 'explaining ancient religions is essential for understanding world history in general and Christianity in particular'.⁹⁸ This primarily pastoral purpose of Men''s six-volume history of religions has to a great extent determined its methods and style.⁹⁹

2.5.1 The Methods of the Six-Volume History

The most typical methods that Men' employs in his history of religions, are: (1) an emphasis on the complementarity between science and religion, (2) the use of visual means (e.g., scientific and artistic photographs, paintings or drawings), (3) employing an extensive critical apparatus, (4) the use of lengthy quotations from original sources. The first two methods, namely, Men''s emphasis on the complementarity between science and religion, as well as his concern about the aesthetic appearance of his books, have already been considered in the previous chapter in the general overview of Men''s writings.¹⁰⁰ Following here is

⁹⁷ *Sources*, p.10.

⁹⁸ *Dialogue*, p. 264. Quoting *Письма Владимира Сергеевича Соловьева* [*Letters of Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov*], СПб., vol. III, p. 105. The influence of this text on Men' is testified by the fact that Men' refers to it on several different occasions. See *Sources*, p. 9; МЕНЬ [MEN'], *Russian Philosophy of Religion*, op. cit. (2003), p. 33.

⁹⁹ The methods and the style of Men''s series of lectures on the history of religions *Spiritual Culture of the World* are essentially the same as those of his other lectures (they have already been discussed in 1.5.2).

¹⁰⁰ See especially p. 50 ff.

an appraisal of the remaining two methods as employed particularly in his history of religions.

Men` includes an extensive critical apparatus into each of the six volumes of his history of religions. It usually consists of lengthy bibliographies, chronologies, maps, glossaries, appendices, references, etc. For example, the bibliography at the end of the volume *Dionysus, Logos and Fate* includes 324 titles,¹⁰¹ that are divided into seven sections:

1. 'History of Greece' (37 titles);
2. 'Greek Culture' (38);
3. 'Greek Religion and Mythology' (79);
4. 'Greek Philosophy. General Works' (28);
5. 'The Pre-Socratic Philosophy' (46);
6. 'Socrates, Plato, Aristotle' (81);
7. 'Handbooks and Manuals' (15).

In his history of religions, as Men` says, 'the reader will only find things based on original sources and conclusions from contemporary investigations'.¹⁰² Taken literally this obviously is an overgeneralisation, but in fact each volume does include numerous references that create a close link between Men`s narrative and the scientific (archaeological, textual, historical, etc.) sources underlying it. For example, 656 references are found in the 465 pages that comprise the main text of *Magism and Monotheism*. The references are placed into the endnotes of

¹⁰¹ See *Dionysus*, pp. 369-384. In comparison, the bibliography to *Sources* includes 373 titles, *Magism*—204, *Gates*—261, *Messengers*—944, *Threshold*—1188 titles. The significant increase of bibliography in the last two volumes is due mostly to inclusion of literature on biblical studies.

¹⁰² *Magism*, p. 16.

each volume, probably to avoid an overloading of the text with technical information, which might impede the primarily pastoral purpose of Men's works.¹⁰³ At the same time, those willing can find plenty of information for further studies. Maslenikova stresses Men's attempts at precision in providing his readers with the newest scientific data. To illustrate this, she gives the following example:

The first edition of *Son of Man* contained the following phrase:

'The Praetorium of Pontius Pilate was located in the Roman fortress of Antonia.' This had been the newest scientific conclusion on the subject. However, after the book had been published, the remains of Herod's palace were excavated in Jerusalem, and the archaeologists came out with a suggestion that Pilate's Praetorium could have been there, not in Antonia.

We had to find all the references on the subject in foreign sources and to translate them for Fr Aleksandr.... As by the time of the new edition of *Son of Man* the scholars had not come to any final conclusion regarding the Praetorium, Fr Aleksandr decided to refer in his description to the features common to both the Roman fortress and Herod's palace, without mentioning its location at all. He took all this trouble for just one and only phrase!¹⁰⁴

Another method employed by Men in his history of religions is the use of lengthy quotations from original literary sources of the ancient cultures. He is doing his best to provide for his readers at least a minimal first hand experience of the religions he is describing. At the same time, as Yeryomin points out, Men thinks his readers need special help to properly understand the excerpts from the ancient writings:

Fr Aleksandr saw clearly that his reader could not be abandoned to face the world of unknown symbols and metaphors alone, even if they had

¹⁰³ E.g., the endnotes in *Magism* occupy 45 pages at the end of the book. If they were placed into the footnotes, there would be around 1-2 footnotes in each page that would take approximately 1/10 of the page.

¹⁰⁴ *Life*, p. 200.

formally been translated into Russian. For this he employs a whole apparatus of modern scientific exegesis, but at the same time he diligently avoids too specific scientific terminology. Thus he helps his reader understand the ancient texts and makes them interesting....¹⁰⁵

Men` usually quotes the ancient writings of the non-biblical religions from the existing Russian translations. In some cases, however, he himself translates into Russian from other modern translations.¹⁰⁶ As to quotations from the Bible, Men` mostly uses the so-called 'Synodal translation' of the Bible.¹⁰⁷ However, to convey the meaning of some texts more accurately, Men` occasionally makes his own translations from the original Hebrew.¹⁰⁸

2.5.2 The Style of the Six-Volume History

The purpose and the methods of Men`s history of religions have strongly affected its style, which combines two very different qualities. On the one hand, the style of the text is easy and fluent, it reminds a novel. This is Yeryomin's impression of reading it for the first time: 'I had a sense of enjoyment. I was delighted in the profundity of thought combined with poetic metaphorical language, crystal clear presentation, and dynamic narrative'.¹⁰⁹ With each new edition of his books, Men` continually worked on their style. Bichkov points out that

¹⁰⁵ *Pastor*, pp. 446-447.

¹⁰⁶ For example, the excerpts from the Zoroastrianism's sacred book *Avesta* are translated by Men` from English into Russian (see *Messengers*, pp. 537-538, endnote no. 6).

¹⁰⁷ The Synodal translation (Russ. *Синодальный перевод*) of the Bible was made in Russia in 1860-1876. Since then there have been several revised editions of it. Until now, the Synodal translation remains the main translation of the Bible in the Russian Orthodox Church.

¹⁰⁸ See Men`s note on this in *Magism*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ *Pastor*, pp. 447-448.

the ease of his style results from hard efforts. He liked to quote Gogol who had said that a book can become a work of art only after it has been rewritten ten times.¹¹⁰

Similarly, Maslenikova notes that 'with the passing of years he had developed an increasingly clear ... style'.¹¹¹ On the other hand, Men's six-volume history provides a large amount of scientific information, especially in religious studies, history, philosophy and theology.¹¹² The ample critical apparatus in general and the numerous references in particular make the text similar to a research work. This is what Hamant says about these two aspects of Men's style: 'He strove to give his readers ... the maximal amount of information, by using a clear style accessible to non-specialists.'¹¹³ Men was well aware of a potential tension between the scientific and the literary aspects of his writings, so he explicitly cautioned against the treatment of this six-volume history primarily as a scientific work:

This book [i.e., *Magism and Monotheism*] is not intended to be a highly specialised work, and even less is it a school-book. As well as the remaining volumes, it has been conceived ... as a novel or even a poem.¹¹⁴

Yeryomin also induces the potential translators of *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life* to keep in mind that it 'first of all is a highly artistic literary work'.¹¹⁵ Thus, the style that Men has employed makes his history of religions similar to a historical novel or, in Yeryomin's words, 'a religious epic (Russ.

¹¹⁰ БЫЧКОВ [BICHKOV], op. cit. (1996).

¹¹¹ *Life*, p. 200.

¹¹² Men describes this work as 'an attempt to make a synthesis of religion, philosophy and history (Russ. *религиозно-философский и исторический синтез*)' (*Sources*, p. 10).

¹¹³ *Witness*, p. 164.

¹¹⁴ *Magism*, p. 16.

¹¹⁵ *Pastor*, p. 448.

религиозная эпопея)',¹¹⁶ based on scrupulously referenced scientific sources. The epic nature of Men's narrative is especially emphasised by the fact that he sees the history of religions as a dramatic history of man's search for God and of his struggle against *Magism*. On this point, Belavin has to say that Men's six-volume history offers 'a thrilling vision of religious searches',¹¹⁷ while Hamant calls it 'man's spiritual saga'.¹¹⁸ This epic style makes the work accessible to a very wide audience. At the same time, since Men's main purpose is pastoral rather than recreational, this literary work has at its basis very definite theology that is consistently upheld throughout the six volumes. In general, it is clear from the overview in chapter 2 that Men's legacy contains sufficient material for presenting a coherent and detailed picture of his understanding of the world's religions, which can, therefore, be evaluated from the theological point of view.

¹¹⁶ *Pastor*, p. 470.

¹¹⁷ БЕЛАВИН, А. [BELAVIN, A.]. 'Предисловие' ['Foreword']. In *Мировая духовная культура. Христианство. Церковь (Лекции и беседы)*, Александр МЕНЬ [*Spiritual Culture of the World. Christianity. The Church (Lectures and Discussions)*, Aleksandr MEN']. Москва: Фонд имени Александра Меня, 1995; http://www.krotov.org/library/m/menn/04/mdk_ogl.html [30 July 2003].

¹¹⁸ *Witness*, p. 164.

CHAPTER 3. THE DECLARATION *DOMINUS IESUS*: CATHOLICISM ENCOUNTERS AND COUNTERS RELIGIOUS RELATIVISM

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of chapter 3 is to introduce the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, with the view of a subsequent evaluation of Aleksandr Men's works in the light of this document. *Dominus Iesus*, promulgated in 2000, is a doctrinal document of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. During the period of the preparation and promulgation of *Dominus Iesus*, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (presently Pope Benedict XVI) used to be the prefect of this Congregation. The Declaration represents an attempt to oppose the spread of religious relativism, which sees all religions as essentially equal in their value and truthfulness.

The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* is part of the Catholic doctrine on the non-biblical religions as it has evolved in the course of history. Since the times of apostle Paul, practical encounters with the other religions have been challenging the followers of Christ to provide a sound theory on the relationship between these religions and Christianity. The early Church writers usually displayed a rather negative view of the non-biblical religions as predominant expressions of human sinfulness and error. They found few positive aspects in them. The statement of the Church Fathers 'outside the Church there is no salvation' has been expressing the basic attitude of the Catholic Church towards the non-biblical religions for centuries. Although this affirmation was not usually interpreted in its strictly exclusivist sense, namely, that a non-Christian could not be saved in principle, the Church's view of such a possibility was generally

rather pessimistic.¹ Some positive changes in this attitude appeared with the works of St Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, and especially with the ecclesial recognition of Thomism by the Council of Trent three centuries later. These developments, however, were rather slow. Before the middle of the 20th century, the Catholic Church had made very few official statements about the non-biblical religions, and the Church's position on these issues was expressed in a very fragmentary way only.

The situation started changing a few decades before Vatican II. In the 1940s Pius XII made important statements on a possibility of salvation for non-Christians thanks to their implicit belonging to the Church. At the same time, issues related to the non-biblical religions became the focus of attention for several prominent Catholic theologians, such as Henri de Lubac, Jean Danielou, and Karl Rahner.² Vatican II (1962-1965) proved to be a turning point in the Catholic Church's relationship with the non-biblical religions. For the first time in Church's history, the Council promulgated a systematically developed Catholic doctrine of this relationship. This gave an impetus to wide-ranging theological investigations in this area. It is Vatican II and the subsequent processes that led to *Dominus Iesus* in 2000. Thus, to understand the purpose and meaning of *Dominus Iesus* properly, the Declaration has to be viewed in the context of the Church's relationship with the other religions as it has been developing since Vatican II. The promulgation of *Dominus Iesus* triggered a great controversy

¹ For the current Catholic interpretation of the phrase 'outside the Church there is no salvation' (Lat. *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*), see CCC 846-848.

² For a review of works of these and some other pre-conciliar theologians see RUOKANEN, op. cit. (1992), pp. 20-34.

both within and outside the Catholic Church, which suggests that the document has touched some really problematic and important issues. The historical and theological background of *Dominus Iesus*, as well as the circumstances of its promulgation are reviewed in section 3.2. The questions of its authorship, purpose, doctrinal authority, and method are analysed in 3.3. The Declaration opposes several specific theological positions as expressions of religious relativism, and declares them incompatible with the faith of the Catholic Church. A review of the contents of *Dominus Iesus* is given in 3.4, while the full English text of the Declaration is included into Appendix 2. The final section 3.5 is devoted to establishing the theological links between *Dominus Iesus* and the legacy of Aleksandr Men'. This section sums up the findings of chapters 1-3, and completes the preparation for the analysis of Men's works in further chapters 4-6.

3.2 The Historical and Theological Context of *Dominus Iesus*

3.2.1 From Vatican II to *Dominus Iesus*

Vatican II produced a comprehensive explanation of the Church's relationship with the other religions. One of the sixteen documents of the Council, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, is devoted exclusively to this issue. Its important aspects are also discussed in some other documents, such as Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, Decree on the Church's missionary activity *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, Declaration on Religious Liberty *Dignitatis Humanae*, and Pastoral

Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*.³ Vatican II affirmed with unparalleled clarity the Catholic Church's positive attitude towards the non-Christian religions, which could be summarised in the following passage from *Nostra Aetate*:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and teachings, which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.⁴

At the same time, the Council did not mean to lessen the significance of Christ, as is highlighted in the very next sentence of *Nostra Aetate*:

Yet she proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (*John* 14:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (2 *Corinthians* 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life.⁵

The Council's affirmation of the positive value of the non-Christian religions brought new liveliness into the theological discussions on the subject. On the other hand, this affirmation was sometimes interpreted in its extreme and one-sided meaning that downplayed the importance of Christ, and overestimated the values present in the other religions. This tendency turned out to be especially disturbing in the Church's missionary activity, as it put under question the

³ See, for instance, LG 16-17; *Ad Gentes Divinitus* (Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church's missionary activity), 1965, 8-9 (hereafter quoted as AG); *Dignitatis Humanae* (Vatican Council II, Declaration on Religious Liberty), 1965, 2-4, 10; *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 1965, 12-18. The Church's relationship to the other religions is also considered in Paul VI's encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, promulgated on 6 August 1964, between the second and the third sessions of Vatican II (see PAUL VI. Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, 1964, 107-108).

⁴ NA 2. *Dominus Iesus* takes this text as its starting point for explaining the Catholic attitude towards the non-Christian religions (see DI 2). Unless otherwise noted, all the quotations from the documents of the Second Vatican Council are taken from: *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Study Edition. Gen. ed. Austin FLANNERY, O. P. Collegeville, IN: The Liturgical Press, 1992.

⁵ NA 2, emphasis added.

foundational reasons for Christian missions. The problem was addressed by Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975. Here, the pope emphasises explicitly that these ideas should not be regarded as following from the documents of Vatican II:

The most insidious of these excuses [that impede evangelisation] are certainly the ones which people claim to find support for in such and such a teaching of the Council.

Thus one too frequently hears it said, in various terms, that to impose a truth, be it that of the Gospel, or to impose a way, be it that of salvation, cannot but be a violation of religious liberty. Besides, it is added, why proclaim the Gospel when the whole world is saved by uprightness of heart? We know likewise that the world and history are filled with 'seeds of the Word'; is it not therefore an illusion to claim to bring the Gospel where it already exists in the seeds that the Lord Himself has sown?

Anyone who takes the trouble to study in the Council's documents the questions upon which these excuses draw too superficially will find quite a different view.⁶

Thus the Church's attitude towards the non-Christian religions has been part of the Magisterium's direct concern since as early as the first decade after Vatican II. This concern became especially lively during the pontificate of John Paul II.⁷ In the middle of the 1980s, the then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger⁸ in one of his interviews indicates some quite alarming tendencies in this field:

It is part of the Church's ancient, traditional teaching that every man is called to salvation and de facto can be saved if he sincerely follows the precepts of his own conscience, even without being a visible member of the Catholic Church. This teaching however, which ... was already accepted and beyond dispute, has been put forward in an extreme form since the Council on the basis of theories like that of 'anonymous Christians'. Ultimately it has been proposed that grace is always given

⁶ PAUL VI. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, 80. Hereafter quoted as *EN*. This issue is also discussed in *EN* 53.

⁷ John Paul II was elected Pope on 16 October 1978. He mentions the Church's attitude towards the non-Christian religions in his very first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* promulgated in March 1979 (see JOHN PAUL II. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 1979, 11).

⁸ Cardinal Ratzinger was appointed prefect of the *CDF* on 25 November 1981.

provided that a person—believing in no religion at all or subscribing to any religion whatsoever—accepts himself as a human being. That is all that is necessary. According to these theories the Christian's 'plus' is only that he is *aware* of this grace, which inheres actually in all people, whether baptized or not. Hand in hand, then, with the weakening of the necessity of baptism, went the overemphasis on the values of the non-Christian religions, which many theologians saw not as *extraordinary* paths of salvation but precisely as *ordinary* ones....

Naturally, hypotheses of this kind caused the missionary zeal of many to slacken. Many a one began to wonder, 'Why should we disturb non-Christians, urging them to accept baptism and faith in Christ, if their religion is their way to salvation in their culture, in their part of the world?'⁹

John Paul II treated the intensification of the relationship with the non-Christian religions as one of the chief priorities of his pontificate. Some of his initiatives in this field, such as his address to 80,000 Muslims in Morocco in 1985, and his visit to the Synagogue of Rome in 1986, have caused a world-wide resonance. However, the Catholic Church's demonstration of her positive attitude towards non-Christians harbours potential danger, as it can easily lead—against the Pope's intention—to interpretations that downplay the absolute value of Christ. That especially clearly proved to be the case with the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi on 27 October 1986. The Pope invited the representatives of various religions to pray for peace, and took part there himself. Admired and praised by many within and outside the Church, this gathering was also received with some reservation and even criticism on the Catholic side, also on the part of the Catholic hierarchy.¹⁰ It was feared that the event could support the view that

⁹ RATZINGER, Joseph, MESSORI, Vittorio. *The Ratzinger Report. An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*. Transl. Attanasio SALVATOR and Graham HARRISON. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986, pp. 196-197.

¹⁰ Cardinal Ratzinger was absent from Assisi during the meeting in 1986, and this fact has been interpreted by some observers as his disapproval of the event. On 24 January 2002, a year and a half after the promulgation of *DI*, John Paul II called another Day of Prayer for peace in Assisi. This time Cardinal Ratzinger participated in the event, and described it as an important step in striving for peace among nations and religions (see Zenit—The World Seen From Rome (21 February 2002). 'Cardinal Ratzinger Comments on Lessons of Assisi';

the Catholic Church considers her faith to be equal to the other religions of the world. John Paul II has heeded the critical remarks, as is seen from his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, promulgated in 1990. Beside reiterating the Council's teaching on the positive value of the non-Christian religions, it also indicates their limitations, and forcefully emphasises the need for the Church's mission. The encyclical has also responded to the debates on the meeting of Assisi with the Pope's explanation of his main motive for calling such a gathering:

Excluding any mistaken interpretation, the interreligious meeting held in Assisi was meant to confirm my conviction that 'every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart.'¹¹

Another important stage in the Catholic understanding of the relationship with the other religions was introduced by Cardinal Ratzinger's talk to the presidents of the Doctrinal Commissions of the Latin American Bishops' Conferences in Mexico, 1996. In the address, entitled 'Relativism: the Central Problem for Faith Today', *religious relativism* was identified as the main current challenge for the faith of the Church. Six years before that, the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* had already noted religious relativism among the hardest problems hindering Church's missionary activity, too:

<http://www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=16953> [26 September 2005]).

¹¹ RM 29. The Pope is quoting his address to Roman Curia of 22 December 1986, 11. As seen from this address, which is fully devoted to the meeting in Assisi, the Pope had not abandoned his determination to emphasise the positive value of non-Christian religions. Even more, he says here that 'The event of Assisi can thus be considered as a visible illustration, an exegesis of the events, a catechesis, intelligible to all, of what is presupposed and signified by the commitment to ecumenism and to the inter-religious dialogue which was recommended and promoted by the Second Vatican Council' (JOHN PAUL II. *Pope's Christmas Address to Roman Curia. The World Situation Constitutes a Pressing Appeal for the Spirit of Assisi*, 22 December 1986, 7.

But one of the most serious reasons for the lack of interest in the missionary task is a widespread indifferentism, which, sad to say, is found also among Christians. It is based on incorrect theological perspectives and is characterized by a *religious relativism* which leads to the belief that 'one religion is as good as another.'¹²

In his address of 1996, Ratzinger analyses the problem in greater detail. The secular relativism of the West, according to him, results from the rationalist philosophy which denies the objectivity of truth. Ratzinger admits the principle of relativism as a necessary part of democratic political life, where no political group can claim its monopoly of objective truth. He points out, however, the serious problems that emerge when this principle is transferred into the ethical and religious spheres. Ratzinger thinks that the Church's faith is especially threatened if the secular relativism of the West is combined with some aspects of the negative theology of the East, that of India in particular. It is then, in his words, that

[an] areligious and pragmatic relativism of Europe and America can get a kind of religious consecration from India which seems to give its renunciation of dogma the dignity of a greater respect before the mystery of God and of man.¹³

Several months after Ratzinger's address, the same topic was analysed in a document issued by the International Theological Commission that is closely linked to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This document, entitled *Christianity and the World Religions*, reviews the contemporary approaches to the relationship between Christianity and the other religions. It seeks to clarify some principles of the so-called 'Christian theology of religions',¹⁴ and criticises

¹² RM 36, emphasis added.

¹³ RATZINGER, op. cit. (1996), emphasis added.

¹⁴ International Theological Commission. *Christianity and the World Religions*, 1997, 7.

the relativistic attitude towards religions of the world. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had judged that the tendencies of religious relativism were dangerously increasing among the Catholic theologians. In the 1990s the Congregation had investigated into the works of several Catholic writers, e.g., those by Tissa Balasuriya and Anthony De Mello, and censured their views as incompatible with the faith of the Catholic Church. Another case was that of the Jesuit theologian Jacques Dupuis. Although his book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* was not condemned, the Congregation made an official warning that the 'book contained notable ambiguities and difficulties on important doctrinal points, which could lead a reader to erroneous or harmful opinions'.¹⁵ The next major step of the Catholic Church in her struggle against the spread of religious relativism was *Dominus Iesus*.

3.2.2 The Promulgation and Reception of *Dominus Iesus*

The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* was promulgated on 5 September 2000, i.e., in the midst of the Catholic celebration of the Jubilee year 2000. This timing reveals important aspects of the intended significance of the document. The celebration of the Jubilee as the Holy Year in the Catholic Church traces its history as far back as the middle ages, and is rooted in the Old Testament tradition of jubilees.¹⁶ In 1994 John Paul II issued the apostolic letter *Tertio*

¹⁵ CDF. Notification on the Book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York 1997) by Father Jacques Dupuis, S.J., 2001, Preface. The Dupuis' case caused a rather strong reaction, as a number of Catholic theologians considered his views to be well balanced and in no way contradicting the Catholic faith (some of their opinions are gathered in: KENDALL, Daniel, O'COLLINS, Gerald (eds.). *In many and Diverse Ways: in Honor of Jacques Dupuis*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003).

¹⁶ In 1300, Pope Boniface VIII established the centenary celebration of the Holy Year. Eventually the interval was reduced to 50, and later, to 25 years.

Millennio Adveniente, a detailed plan for a two-stage preparation for the Jubilee year 2000. The celebration of the Jubilee itself was planned even more carefully. It centred on three main themes: the Trinity, the Eucharist, and ecumenism.¹⁷ The year was rich in events. Some of them were noticed on a worldwide scale, such as the Pope's public penance for the sins of some members of the Church,¹⁸ the ecumenical commemoration of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant witnesses to the faith of the 20th century,¹⁹ as well as the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*. As it was later explained by Cardinal Ratzinger, the promulgation of *Dominus Iesus* had deliberately been placed into the centre of the Jubilee year:

With this Declaration ... the Pope wanted to offer the world a great and solemn recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord *at the height of the Holy Year*, thus bringing what is essential firmly to the centre of this occasion....²⁰

Dominus Iesus expresses in the documental form the central truth of the Christian faith celebrated in the Jubilee year, namely, the lordship of Jesus. This theme of the Declaration, as well as its position 'at the height of the Holy Year', seems to be giving it the status of the central document of the Jubilee year. On the other hand, this has not been stated officially, and the Declaration itself does not make any reference to the Jubilee.

¹⁷ See JOHN PAUL II. Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 1994, 55.

¹⁸ The penitential service was held in the Vatican Basilica on 12 March 2000 (for details see: 'First Sunday of Lent "Day of Pardon" Presentation'; http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents/ns_lit_doc_20000312_presentation-day-pardon_en.html [16 August 2005]).

¹⁹ This service was held in the Flavian Amphitheatre (or Colosseum) in Rome on 7 May 2000 (for details see 'Third Sunday of Easter, 7 May 2000. Ecumenical Commemoration of Witnesses of the Faith in the Twentieth Century. Preparation'; http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents/ns_lit_doc_20000507_testimoni-fede-commem_en.html [16 August 2005]; see also Zenit—The World Seen From Rome (7 May 2000). 'Blood of Christ's Witnesses Gives Impulse to Ecumenism'; <http://www.zenit.org/english/archive/0005/ZE000507.html> [17 October 2005]).

²⁰ RATZINGER, Joseph Cardinal. 'Cardinal Ratzinger Answers the Main Objections Raised against the Declaration "*Dominus Iesus*". *L'Osservatore Romano* (weekly edition in English) 1669, no. 47 (22 November 2000), 10, emphasis added. Hereafter quoted as *Objections*.

As most documents of the Catholic Church are, *Dominus Iesus* has been published in several languages simultaneously, namely, in Latin, English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Polish.²¹ The Declaration was presented at a press conference by four members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: prefect Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, secretary Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, consultants Fr Angelo Amato and Msgr Fernando Ocariz. The press conference is not a usual form for promulgating a document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Apparently, this was aimed at attracting greater attention to *Dominus Iesus*, to give it the widest publicity possible. Differently from most of the Catholic Church's documents, the Declaration was noticed and widely commented not by Catholics alone, but also by the secular media, as well as by the Christians of the other denominations, and by representatives of the other religions. The first reactions of the secular media had been very negative for the most part. Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Newark had summarised them as follows:

The secular press had a heyday with this document. The headlines trumpeted that Catholics think they are the only ones who can be saved, that the pope called other religions inferior and that the Catholic Church was returning to what the media so glibly inferred to have been a past intolerance and intransigence.²²

Subsequently, the Catholic hierarchy started blaming the media for creating a negative welcome for *Dominus Iesus*, and thus fostering the negative opinions in general. Besides, some criticism of the hierarchy concerned the method of the

²¹ The official language of *DI* is Latin. The Latin text is included into the official collection of the Catholic Church documents, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. See Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei. 'Declaratio De Iesu Christi atque Ecclesiae Unicitate et Universalitate Salvifica'. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis. Commentarium Officiale* 92, no. 10 (7 Octobris 2000), 742-765.

²² Catholic Culture. 'The Hierarchy Comment on Dominus Iesus'; http://www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?recnum=3208#McCarrick [8 October 2005]).

promulgation itself. For example, Cardinal Daly, Archbishop emeritus of Armagh, Ireland, was insisting that the high speed of modern communications had placed *Dominus Iesus* in a very unfavourable position for its reception. Daly noted that by their very nature the Church documents required attentive reading and studying, which was hardly done by those working in mass media. As Daly argued,

First reports and early headlines, followed by first reactions, can give a document a label which is very hard to remove and may give the debate a direction which it is nearly impossible later to change. *Dominus Iesus* suffered even more than most documents of its kind in this process. More thought needs to be given in Rome and also at the level of Episcopal Conferences and Dioceses to the method of publication and distribution and explanation of Roman documents.²³

The same is stressed by bishop (now Cardinal) Kasper, the President of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: 'Many of these [negative] reactions appear to be based on information which obviously uninformed secular mass-media have thrown into the arena of public opinion.'²⁴

Cardinal Ratzinger also notes the problems on this level:

classical doctrinal language, as used in our document [*Dominus Iesus*] in continuity with the texts of the Second Vatican Council, is entirely different from that of newspapers and the media. But then the text should be interpreted and not held in contempt.²⁵

On the other hand, the Vatican did make some attempts at securing a more favourable reception of *Dominus Iesus* by the media. Side by side with the Declaration, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith presented 'Synthesis of the Declaration "Dominus Iesus"', which had summarised the main points of

²³ DALY, Cahal B. Cardinal. "Dominus Iesus" and Ecumenical Dialogue'. *L'Osservatore Romano* (weekly edition in English) 1683, no. 10 (7 March 2001), 9.

²⁴ KASPER, op. cit. (2001), 1.

²⁵ *Objections*, 1670, no. 48 (29 November 2000), 6.

the document. In his letter to the presidents of bishops' conferences of 28 July 2000, Ratzinger was explaining that the 'Synthesis' was expected to be 'especially useful in presenting and explaining the text [of *Dominus Iesus*] to representatives of the mass media'.²⁶ However, while commenting on the negative reactions to *Dominus Iesus*, the Catholic Church officials do not mention that the 'Synthesis' could in some way have helped to avert them.

Although, as it will be discussed below, *Dominus Iesus* is dealing primarily with the inter-religious relationship, the reactions to it were mostly concerned with the ecumenical issues. In this respect, Cardinal Ratzinger expresses his disappointment about 'the fact that public reaction, with a few praiseworthy exceptions, has completely disregarded the Declaration's true theme'.²⁷ Many leaders of the Protestant communities have viewed the Declaration as in some way hindering the ecumenical progress made since Vatican II. For example, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey said:

Even though the document is not part of that [ecumenical] process, the idea that Anglican and other churches are not 'proper churches' seems to question the considerable ecumenical gains we have made.²⁸

Dominus Iesus was similarly viewed by Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, too:

We are disappointed that thirty-five years of ecumenical dialogue between Roman Catholics and Lutherans seem not to have been considered in the

²⁶ RATZINGER, Joseph Cardinal. 'Letter to Bishops' Conferences'. *Origins* 30, no. 14 (14 September 2000), 220. This letter was sent together with *DI* and the 'Synthesis'.

²⁷ *Objections*, 1669, no. 47 (22 November 2000), 10.

²⁸ Anglican Communion News Service. 'Statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury concerning the Roman Catholic Document "Dominus Iesus"'; <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/acnsarchive/acns2200/acns2219.html> [31 August 2005].

formulation of the ... documents issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The impact of these statements is more painful because they reflect a different spirit than that which we encounter in many other Lutheran-Roman Catholic relationships.²⁹

The responses of non-Christians also were predominantly negative. Among the strongest reactions to *Dominus Iesus* were those that came from the Jews. Generally, they met the Declaration as seriously impeding their relationship with the Catholic Church. According to President of the Jewish communities in Italy Amos Luzzatto, 'to say that the only possible mediator for salvation is Jesus Christ, removes ... [the Jews] from all dialogue'.³⁰ For the same reason, the Jewish community in Rome refused to participate in the celebration of Judeo-Christian friendship scheduled for 3 October 2000. Side by side with the negative reactions, however, there also were some positive views of non-Catholics. For example, on 7 September 2000, the World Methodist Council released a response to *Dominus Iesus* that viewed it rather positively:

The World Methodist Council welcomes the reaffirmation of Jesus Christ as the one savior of the world.... In its continuing dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, the World Methodist Council looks forward to further exploration on the question of how each partner can come to a fuller recognition of the churchly character of the other.³¹

The reaction from the upper Catholic hierarchy was not one of unanimous support either, which is very unusual for an official Catholic document. As will be

²⁹ NOKO, Ishmael. 'LWF General Secretary on the Vatican document "Dominus Iesus"'; <http://www.wfn.org/2000/09/msg00071.html> [5 September 2005].

³⁰ Zenit—The World Seen From Rome (6 September 2000). 'Religious Leaders Comment on "Dominus Iesus" Declaration'; <http://www.zenit.org/english/archive/0009/ZE000906.html> [17 August 2005].

³¹ NADEO (the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers). 'World Methodist Council leaders respond to Vatican document' (8 September 2000); <http://www.nadeo.org/dominus.html#wmc> [29 May 2006].

discussed below, some of the Catholic leaders especially criticised the method and the tone of the Declaration. Moreover, there were some attempts of treating the Declaration as a deviation from the Catholic Church's earlier attitude toward the ecumenical and inter-religious dialogues. For example, Cardinal König has contrasted *Dominus Iesus* and Vatican II:

the central thrust of *Dominus Iesus* ... risks shattering the confidence of the other faiths in dialogue with us. Fortunately, fundamental passages in the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, can be used as cornerstones in this discussion, so as to re-establish the broken bridges and give them new strength and solidity.³²

Or, as Cardinal Daly notices, in some cases 'the Declaration was perceived as in disaccord with the thinking of Pope John Paul II, or indeed as not having been ... fully endorsed by him'.³³ A hint at this can be seen, for example, in the remark of Cardinal Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, that 'the Pope himself wrote and signed *Ut Unum Sint* but not the *Dominus Iesus* declaration'.³⁴ Cardinal Ratzinger, on the other hand, insisted that John Paul II had wanted *Dominus Iesus* and had been well aware of its contents. In his interview two weeks after the promulgation of *Dominus Iesus*, he said: 'With this Declaration, whose *writing he followed stage by stage with great attention*, the Pope wanted to offer the world a great and solemn recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord'.³⁵ In the face of such controversies, John Paul II explicitly

³² KÖNIG, Franz Cardinal. 'The Light Shines in the Darkness'. *The Tablet* (December 23/30, 2000), 1732.

³³ DALY, op. cit. (2001), p. 10.

³⁴ Quoted in: The Irish Times on the Web (Wednesday, September 27, 2000). 'Cardinal queries status of paper on ecumenism'; <http://www.ireland.com/newspaper/front/2000/0927/fro3.htm> [12 August 2005].

³⁵ *Objections*, 1669, no. 47 (22 November 2000), 10, emphasis added. In his letter to bishops' conferences of 28 July 2000, Ratzinger stressed that 'while not an act of the sovereign pontiff himself, the document [DI] reflects his thinking' (RATZINGER, 'Letter to Bishops' Conferences', op. cit. (2000), p. 220). The fact that John Paul II was well aware of DI is clearly seen from his

reaffirmed his approval of the Declaration in an unprecedented gesture. During the Sunday Angelus message on 1 October 2000 he said:

With the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*—Jesus is Lord—*approved by me in a special way* at the height of the Jubilee Year, I wanted to invite all Christians to renew their fidelity to Him.... I hope that *this Declaration, which is close to my heart*, can, after so many erroneous interpretations, finally fulfil its function both of clarification and of openness.³⁶

It was to *Dominus Iesus* that the Pope devoted most of his Angelus message on that day. He reiterated its most important assertions in regard to both the inter-religious and the ecumenical issues. Besides, in the same message John Paul II countered all attempts of juxtaposing his earlier commitment to ecumenism with the position of *Dominus Iesus*: 'The document [*Dominus Iesus*] thus expresses once again the same ecumenical passion that is the basis of my encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*.'³⁷ Thus, the intervention of October 1 principally ended the debates within the Catholic Church around *Dominus Iesus*. Its impact has also been felt on a broader scale, as it significantly calmed down the scathing criticism of the Declaration in general. The debates had abandoned the level of frivolous mass media reactions to enter the sphere of calmer theological discussion. This has been continuing until now, more than five years after the promulgation of the document.

address delivered as early as 28 January 2000, at the end of the CDF's plenary assembly. This address contained the same assertions that several months later were presented in *DI* (see JOHN PAUL II. *Address of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Members, Consultors and Staff of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, 28 January 2000).

³⁶ JOHN PAUL II. *Angelus Message*, 1 October 2000, 1, emphasis added.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

3.3 The Nature of the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*

3.3.1 The Authorship

The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* was prepared and presented for the papal approval by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which is a part of the Roman Curia. The latter is the Pope's instrument through which he exercises government over the entire Catholic Church. The apparatus of the Roman Curia consists of the Secretariat of State, the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church, as well as a number of Congregations, Tribunals, Councils, Commissions and other institutions. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is the oldest among the nine Congregations in the present Roman Curia, and it traces its history as far back as the 16th century. It was in 1542 that Pope Paul III founded its forerunner—the Sacred Congregation of the Universal Inquisition, commonly known as the Roman Inquisition.³⁸ In 1908, Pius X reorganised the Roman Curia, and renamed the Roman Inquisition as the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office (usually abbreviated as the Holy Office). Another reorganisation took place after Vatican II, when in 1965 Paul VI called it the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This remains its present name, usually abbreviated as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.³⁹ The current functions of the Congregation in very general terms are defined in the apostolic constitution on the Roman Curia *Pastor Bonus*:

³⁸ The Roman Inquisition has to be distinguished from the other forms of inquisition, such as the Papal Inquisition established by Gregory IX in 1231, or the Spanish Inquisition established by Sixtus IV in 1478.

³⁹ The abbreviated form is also used in official documents (see, e.g., JOHN PAUL II. Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, 1988, 48). This name, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is used in the present thesis, too.

The proper duty of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to promote and safeguard the doctrine on faith and morals in the whole Catholic world; so it has competence in things that touch this matter in any way.⁴⁰

The present structure of the Congregation is as follows: it is headed by a Cardinal Prefect; it has a secretary, an under-secretary, a promoter of justice, a staff, a group of members and consultants.⁴¹ The numerous publications of the Congregation are divided into three groups: doctrinal documents, disciplinary documents, and documents on sacramental questions.⁴² The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* belongs to the group of the doctrinal documents.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is an organ of the Magisterium—the official teaching authority of the Catholic Church.⁴³ Due to this magisterial authority, the input by individual authors or groups into drafting particular documents of the Congregation is hardly ever made public. This helps to emphasise the magisterial status and the papal approval, and prevents undermining the document's authority because of the reader's possible partiality towards some or other personalities. Thus, no comprehensive accounts have

⁴⁰ JOHN PAUL II. *Pastor Bonus* 48. The CDF is listed the first in the official listings of the Vatican Congregations, and it is usually held the most important in Roman Curia.

⁴¹ In 2002, for example, the CDF had a staff of 33, as well as 25 members (Cardinals and bishops) and 28 consultants (see 'Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith'; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_14071997_en.html [14 July 2005]).

⁴² Most of the documents are available on-line. See the CDF's official website: 'The Roman Curia. Congregations. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith'; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/index.htm [15 June 2005].

⁴³ The CDF's instruction *Donum Veritatis* explicitly states that 'the documents issued by this Congregation [for the Doctrine of the Faith] expressly approved by the Pope participate in the ordinary magisterium of the successor of Peter' (CDF. Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum Veritatis*, 1990, 18).

been available on the process of drafting *Dominus Iesus*.⁴⁴ It is only accidental remarks on this issue that have appeared publicly, mostly in the interviews of the Catholic hierarchy. It can be concluded from this fragmentary information that in writing the Declaration some kind of collegial approach to the task had been adopted.⁴⁵ However, despite the absence of thorough reports, it is rather obvious that the prefect of the Congregation Cardinal Ratzinger had been personally closely involved in working *Dominus Iesus* out. His volume *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, which consists of the articles mostly written in the 1990s, serves as good evidence for that. It is seen from these works that the main themes of *Dominus Iesus* had been among Ratzinger's primary concerns for at least a decade prior to the promulgation of the Declaration. As noted by Catholic scholar Paul J. Griffiths in his review of the

⁴⁴ This practice differs significantly from the treatment of those documents of the Catholic Church that are not part of the Magisterium. Such, for example, is the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of 1993, entitled 'The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church'. The Pontifical Biblical Commission is closely linked to the CDF and is headed by its Cardinal Prefect, but it is not an organ of the Magisterium. The details of drafting 'The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church' were widely publicly commented by the members of the Commission (see WILLIAMSON, Peter S. *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture. A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2001, pp. 15-21).

⁴⁵ Cardinal Pierre Eyt, president of the French bishops' Commission on the Doctrine, explicitly states that *Dominus Iesus* was 'the fruit of collective work' (Zenit—The World Seen From Rome (8 September 2000). "Dominus Iesus" is "Jubilee" document'; <http://www.zenit.org/english/archive/0009/ZE000908.html> [17 August 2005]). This is confirmed by other remarks, too. For example, while replying to a journalist's question about the consultation of the Asian bishops', Bertone asserted during the presentation of *DI* that the Asian bishops—and in particular those of India—had been consulted in the process of drafting the Declaration (see: Vatican Information Services (5 September 2000). 'World Religions are not Complementary to Revelation'; http://faithleap.home.att.net/Dominus_Iesus_news.htm#Article%20Dominus%20Iesus [8 October 2005]. Hereafter quoted as *VISWR*). Also, Ratzinger says in one of his interviews that earlier drafts of *DI* were 'presented several times at the ordinary meeting of the Cardinals and once at the plenary meeting in which all our foreign members take part' (*Objections*, 1670, no. 48 (29 November 2000), 6). While answering the interviewer's question if the remarks of Cardinal Cassidy and bishop Kasper—the two members of the CDF who after the promulgation of *DI* had made some public critical remarks about it—were taken into account, Ratzinger said, 'Almost all the proposals of the two persons in question were accepted' (*ibid.*).

book, 'there seems little doubt that Ratzinger had more of a hand in its [i.e., the Declaration's] composition than anyone else'.⁴⁶

3.3.2 *The Purpose of the Declaration, and Its Intended Readership*

The primary concern that has caused the drafting of *Dominus Iesus* is the spread of religious relativism as well as the consequent weakening of missionary motivation. That is explicitly stated in the Declaration's Introduction: 'The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories'.⁴⁷ While presenting *Dominus Iesus* at the press-conference, Ratzinger stresses the problem of relativism in his opening statements, too:

In the lively contemporary debate on the relationship of Christianity to other religions, the idea is growing that all religions are equally valid ways to salvation for those who follow them. This is a conviction that is widespread by now not only in theological circles, but also in increasingly broad sectors of public opinion, both Catholic and non-Catholic, especially those areas most influenced by the cultural tendencies prevalent in the West today, which can be defined, without fear of contradiction, using the word relativism.⁴⁸

Therefore, the general purpose of *Dominus Iesus* is to oppose religious relativism and to reaffirm the relevancy of the Church's missionary proclamation. *Dominus Iesus* does not analyse the phenomenon of religious relativism itself. Rather, it identifies several theological ideas as concrete expressions of religious relativism, and then shows them as incompatible with the Catholic faith.

⁴⁶ GRIFFITHS, Paul J. 'Books in Review. Rehabilitating Truth'; <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0505/reviews/griffiths.html> [8 October 2005].

⁴⁷ DI 4.

⁴⁸ RATZINGER, Joseph Cardinal. 'Reasons for the Christian Claim. The remarks made by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the presentation of the Church document *Dominus Iesus*. Press Room of the Holy See, September 5, 2000'; <http://www.traces-cl.com/archive/2000/ottobre/ratzing.htm> [12 July 2005].

The Declaration explains the scope and the limits of its intention in the following way:

its purpose ... is not to treat in a systematic manner the question of the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church, nor to propose solutions to questions that are matters of free theological debate, but rather to set forth again the doctrine of the Catholic faith in these areas, pointing out some fundamental questions that remain open to further development, and refuting specific positions that are erroneous or ambiguous.⁴⁹

Thus, the Declaration does not intend to treat exhaustively the theology of 'unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church'. It does not promulgate any new doctrines on the questions that have not yet been defined by the Magisterium either. Its intention is just to restate and to explain the Catholic faith in this area, in order (1) to indicate directions for further Catholic theological research, and (2) to warn against errors and ambiguities. Therefore, the immediate aim of the Declaration is to provide some specific guidelines for Catholic theology.

The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* is intended for the Catholic reader: 'the present Declaration seeks to recall to *Bishops, theologians, and all the Catholic faithful*, certain indispensable elements of Christian doctrine'.⁵⁰ Although 'all the Catholic faithful' are listed among the intended readers, the Declaration is mainly addressed to the first two groups, namely, to bishops and theologians. That can be seen from the very next phrase, which states that the purpose of the Declaration is to 'help *theological* reflection in developing solutions consistent

⁴⁹ *DI* 3.

⁵⁰ *DI* 3, emphasis added. 'Bishops' and 'theologians' here of course refer to *Catholic* bishops and *Catholic* theologians. This is also clear from the general style of *DI*, which presents its assertions as authoritatively binding (for a discussion of the authority of the document, see 3.3.3).

with the contents of the faith'.⁵¹ All the Catholic faithful are certainly welcome to take part in such a reflection,⁵² and, to some extent, even in developing the solutions. However, this task is first of all for those professionally involved with the theological research, namely, the Catholic theologians who are directly carrying it out, as well as for the bishops who supervise it from the doctrinal point of view. This focus of attention on theological reflection is also reconfirmed in the Conclusion of the document:

Faced with certain problematic and even erroneous propositions, *theological reflection* is called to reconfirm the Church's faith and to give reasons for her hope in a way that is convincing and effective.⁵³

The negative reactions to the Declaration, however, eventually prompted some officials of the Catholic Church to conclude that 'all the Catholic faithful' was too broad an audience for the document. It usually was the method and the literary style of the Declaration that were considered too technical for an audience wider than the narrow circle of professional theologians. For example, Cardinal Kasper makes the following comment:

The highly technical language of this document for the instruction of Catholic theologians—a document that is perhaps a little too densely written—raised misunderstandings on the very meaning and intention of the text among people who are not very familiar with Catholic theological 'jargon' and with the rules of its correct interpretation.⁵⁴

Similarly, Cardinal König argues that the Catholic faithful are not ready for the language of *Dominus Iesus*:

It is a language cultivated by theologians and addressed to bishops and theologians and it is not easily understood by ordinary people without

⁵¹ *DI* 3.

⁵² See, e.g., Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*, 1997, 71.

⁵³ *DI* 23, emphasis added.

⁵⁴ KASPER, op. cit. (2001), 1.

necessary preparation.... It is my conviction that we must discuss these matters on two different linguistic levels. We should have one language for the Catholic people and the media, and another for the theologians—whether for Christian ecumenical dialogue or for interreligious dialogue. Theologians should not address a general audience, but they tried to do so with *Dominus Iesus*; although primarily for bishops' conferences and theologians, it was also addressed to Catholics in general. People need to be prepared before a document like that is launched on them.⁵⁵

As will be shown below, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith eventually explained the literary style of *Dominus Iesus*, but it did not respond to the criticism about the intended readership of the document.

3.3.3 The Doctrinal Authority of the Declaration

The documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith are to be signed by its Prefect and its secretary. Thus *Dominus Iesus* bears the signatures of Cardinal Prefect Joseph Ratzinger and secretary Tarcisio Bertone, S.D.B., Archbishop Emeritus of Vercelli. Also, as a magisterial document of this Congregation, *Dominus Iesus* is ratified by the Pope. The ratification formula states in the second-last paragraph of the Declaration:

The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, at the Audience of June 16, 2000, granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with sure knowledge and by his apostolic authority, ratified and confirmed this Declaration, adopted in Plenary Session and ordered its publication.⁵⁶

The phrase 'with sure knowledge and by his apostolic authority' (Lat. *certa scientia et auctoritate sua apostolica ratam habuit*) distinguishes this text from the ratification formulas at the end of similar documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Archbishop Bertone explains this part of the ratification

⁵⁵ KÖNIG, op. cit. (2000), p. 1732.

⁵⁶ *DI*, the concluding ratification formula.

formula as expressing its 'exceptional and elevated authority.... This reflects the importance and essentiality of the doctrine presented in the declaration'.⁵⁷ After the promulgation of *Dominus Iesus*, this part of the ratification formula helped to counter the critics' attempts to undermine the Declaration's authority. For example, this is what Cardinal Winning, President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, said shortly after the presentation of *Dominus Iesus*:

I find it predictable but unhelpful to read that the declaration is 'not infallible'; the implication being that it can safely be ignored. In fact, it cannot. Expressly approved by the Pope himself, this re-statement of the Church's belief is not on a par with the thesis of this or that theologian. The phrase used, 'certa scientia et auctoritate sua apostolica ratam habuit' is clear evidence that this document cannot be easily dismissed or ignored.⁵⁸

At the press conference for presenting *Dominus Iesus* Archbishop Bertone explained the precise level of the magisterial authority of the Declaration: 'What it contains are *truths of divine and Catholic faith* or *truths of Catholic doctrine that must be firmly held*'.⁵⁹ Here, Bertone is making reference to the three levels of authoritativeness of magisterial pronouncements that had been defined in *The Code of Canon Law*,⁶⁰ and further explained in several recent documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.⁶¹ Besides distinguishing the three

⁵⁷ VISWR (5 September 2000).

⁵⁸ WINNING, Cardinal Thomas. 'Statements on *Dominus Iesus*'; <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/briefing/0010/0010009.htm> [6 August 2005].

⁵⁹ VISWR (5 September 2000), emphasis added.

⁶⁰ See canons 750, 752 and 1371, as well as their commentaries, in: CORIDEN, James A., GREEN, Thomas J., HEINTSCHEL, Donald E. (eds.). *The Code of Canon Law. A Text and Commentary*. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985, pp. 547-548, 922. Important modifications of canons 750 and 1371 were made by John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio Ad Tuendam Fidem* in 1998.

⁶¹ These include Instruction *Donum Veritatis* (1990), *Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity on Assuming an Office to be Exercised in the Name of the Church* (1998), and *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Professio Fidei* (1998).

levels of authority, these documents also define the level of assent required by each from the Catholic faithful. The *highest level* of authority is claimed when the Magisterium presents a teaching as 'divinely revealed'.⁶² In this case the teaching 'must be believed with divine and Catholic faith'.⁶³ The *second level* of authority is being asserted when a doctrine is proposed by the Magisterium 'in a definitive way'.⁶⁴ Such doctrine 'must be firmly accepted and held'⁶⁵ by the faithful. The *third level* of doctrinal authority occurs when the Magisterium presents a doctrine without 'intending to act "definitively"'.⁶⁶ It requires the assent from the faithful called 'religious submission of will and intellect'.⁶⁷ Bertone's phrases 'truths of divine and Catholic faith' and 'truths of Catholic doctrine that must be firmly held' respectively indicate the highest and the second highest levels of doctrinal authority. Further, Bertone defines the necessary assent: 'Consequently, the assent required from the faithful is definitive and irrevocable.'⁶⁸ Although the doctrines are of two different levels of magisterial authority, in both cases the assent should be 'definitive and irrevocable'. As the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith explains, in regard to the two highest levels of magisterial pronouncements, 'there is no difference with respect to the *full* and *irrevocable* character of the assent which is owed to

⁶² CDF. *Donum Veritatis* 23.

⁶³ JOHN PAUL II. Apostolic Letter Motu Proprio *Ad Tuendam Fidem*, 1998, 4.

⁶⁴ CDF. *Donum Veritatis* 23.

⁶⁵ JOHN PAUL II. *Ad Tuendam Fidem* 2.

⁶⁶ CDF. *Donum Veritatis* 23.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ VISWR (5 September 2000).

these teachings'.⁶⁹ In relationship to the level of the magisterial authority, Bertone stresses the infallibility of the teaching contained in *Dominus Iesus*: 'if a doctrine is taught as definitive, and consequently unchangeable, this presupposes that it is taught by the Magisterium with an infallible act'.⁷⁰

While explaining the specific doctrines, the Declaration periodically repeats the formulas of required assent 'it must be firmly believed' (Lat. *firmiter credenda est*) and 'it must be firmly held' (Lat. *firmiter tenenda est*). The first formula indicates the highest level of authority asserted, and the second formula indicates the second highest level of authority. Side by side with restating the truths of faith to be believed or to be held, the Declaration immediately censures some specific contradictory views.⁷¹ This allows precise evaluation of the censured ideas in reference to the Code of Canon Law.

3.3.4 The Method of the Declaration, and Its Literary Genre

The general method employed in the Declaration is described thus: 'the Declaration takes up what has been taught in previous magisterial documents,

⁶⁹ *CNCDF* 6, emphasis added. However, these two kinds of assent are not identical: 'The difference [between them] concerns the supernatural virtue of faith: in the case of truths of the first paragraph [i.e., the highest level], the assent is based directly on faith in the authority of the Word of God (doctrines de fide credenda); in the case of the truths of the second paragraph [i.e., the second highest level], the assent is based on faith in the Holy Spirit's assistance to the Magisterium and on the Catholic doctrine of the infallibility of the Magisterium (doctrines de fide tenenda)' (*ibid.*).

⁷⁰ *VISWR* (5 September 2000). As *CDF* explains in the *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Professio Fidei*, there are several ways of how the Magisterium can make infallible pronouncements of both the highest and the second highest levels of doctrinal authority (see paragraphs 5-6).

⁷¹ For that purpose it employs phrases like 'in profound conflict with the Christian faith' (*DI* 10), 'contrary to the Catholic faith' (*DI* 12), etc.

in order to reiterate certain truths that are part of the Church's faith'.⁷² This reiteration is also signified by the term 'declaration'. According to the explanation provided by Bertone, this term means that the document

does not teach new doctrines ... rather, it reaffirms and summarizes the doctrine of Catholic faith defined and taught in earlier documents on the Church's Magisterium; and it indicates the correct interpretation thereof in the face of doctrinal errors and ambiguities that have become widespread in modern theological and ecclesial circles.⁷³

Ratzinger also stresses this reliance on the previous Magisterium: 'the Declaration ... has merely taken up the Council's texts and the post-conciliar documents, neither adding nor removing anything'.⁷⁴ As will be shown below, *Dominus Iesus* includes numerous and lengthy quotations from the conciliar and post-conciliar documents. Beside reiterating previous magisterial teachings, *Dominus Iesus* also comments on their correct interpretation, as is pointed out by Bertone in his explanation of the term 'declaration'.

In regard to the literary genre, *Dominus Iesus* shortly states that it is written in an 'expository language (Lat. *stylus expositivus*)'.⁷⁵ Further it says that this genre suits the Declaration's purpose to reiterate and explain previous Magisterium. As it has been noted, much of the criticism that the Declaration received after its promulgation was namely against its literary style. Differently from the content, it was the style that was particularly criticised by the Catholic hierarchy, too. For example, Archbishop (now Cardinal) Karl Lehmann, president of the German

⁷² DI 3.

⁷³ VISWR (5 September 2000).

⁷⁴ *Objections*, 1669, no. 47 (22 November 2000), 10.

⁷⁵ DI 3.

Bishops' Conference, has been quoted as regretting that *Dominus Iesus* had not been 'written in the style of the great conciliar texts'.⁷⁶ Cardinal Cassidy critically remarked on the Declaration's 'scholastic manner of saying "This is true, that is not true."⁷⁷ Cardinal Kasper expressed his agreement with the fundamental contents of the document, but noted that it 'lacked the necessary sensitivity'.⁷⁸ Similarly, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn has been reported as expressing his support for the Declaration's contents, but stating that its 'style could be questioned'.⁷⁹

It is probably these criticisms that have led the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to an official explanation of the genre of *Dominus Iesus*. This was done in half a year after its promulgation, in the document entitled 'Commentary on the *Notification* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Regarding the Book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by Father Jacques Dupuis, S.J.'. The final paragraph of the 'Commentary' is devoted to explaining the literary genre of the documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in particular that of the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*. The explanation focuses on comparing the literary genre of the Congregation's documents with that of the texts of Vatican II and the encyclicals by John Paul II. According to the 'Commentary', different literary genres represent the different purposes pursued by these documents. The documents of Vatican II and the Pope's

⁷⁶ Ratzinger's interviewer quotes this in: *Objections*, 1670, no. 48 (29 November 2000), 6.

⁷⁷ Quoted in: MAGISTER, Sandro. 'John Paul II and the Other Religions: From Assisi to "Dominus Iesus"'; <http://www.tcrnews2.com/Magister.html> [6 November 2004].

⁷⁸ Quoted in: RYAN, Thomas, CSP. "'Dominus Iesus': Aftershocks'; <http://www.paulistinstitute.org/articles.htm> [4 August 2005].

⁷⁹ Quoted in: DALY, op. cit. (2001), p. 10.

encyclicals are described as texts presenting ‘ample and precise reasoning on doctrines of faith and on pastoral questions.... [They are of] the explanatory and pastoral character’.⁸⁰ In contrast, the documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith are written in ‘the literary genre of the censuring/declarative type’, and the ‘indicative/declaratory tone’. It suits their purpose ‘to set out precise points of doctrine, to censure errors or ambiguities, and to indicate the degree of assent that is required of the faithful’.⁸¹ The ‘Commentary’ stresses that the literary genre adopted in *Dominus Iesus* ‘is not a sign of authoritarianism or unjustified harshness.... To repeat, it is not a tone of imposition, but one of declaration and solemn celebration of faith’.⁸² Therefore, according to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the literary style of the Declaration is intentionally that of authoritative concise statements. However, the question raised by some Catholic officials remains open, namely, if this style really was best suited for the intended readership of the Declaration and the wide publicity given to it.

3.4 The Contents of the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*

The first words in the document, which traditionally also serve as its title, is *Dominus Iesus*—the Lord Jesus. They are from 1 *Corinthians* 12:3, translated into English as ‘Jesus is Lord’:

⁸⁰ *CNCDF* 6.

⁸¹ *CNCDF* 6.

⁸² *CNCDF* 6.

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus be cursed!" and not one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.⁸³

The words 'Jesus is Lord' convey an exceptionally important and rich Christological meaning, including the faith in Christ's divinity, and constitute one of the earliest expressions of the Christian faith.⁸⁴ Ratzinger stresses that the phrase chosen for the title of the document encompasses the very 'essence of Christianity':

The document begins with the words '*Dominus Iesus*'; this is the brief formula of faith contained in the First Letter to the Corinthians (12:3), in which Paul has summarized the essence of Christianity: Jesus is Lord.⁸⁵

Thus the title indicates that *Dominus Iesus* is dealing with the essential issues of the Christian faith. The Declaration's subtitle, 'on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church', further specifies its object, namely, certain Christological and ecclesiological issues, pertaining to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the Church, and to their universal role in salvation. Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, archbishop of Bologna, is reported to have emphasised the distinctive importance of the Declaration's theme among the other interventions of the Congregation:

That the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith should have thought it necessary to intervene in the question of 'the uniqueness and universal salvific character of Jesus and the Church' with the declaration "*Dominus*

⁸³ The phrase '*Dominus Iesus*' appears in the Latin text of the Vulgate Bible: 'ideo notum vobis facio quod nemo in Spiritu Dei loquens dicit anathema Iesu et nemo potest dicere *Dominus Iesus* nisi in Spiritu Sancto' (emphasis added).

⁸⁴ See CCC 446-451. See also: KERESZTY, Roch A. *Jesus Christ. Fundamentals of Christology*. Ed. J. Stephen MADDUX. New York: Alba House, 1991, pp. 138-142; GALOT, Jean. *Who is Christ? A Theology of the Incarnation*. Transl. M. Angeline BOUCHARD. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989, pp. 80-83.

⁸⁵ *Objections*, 1669, no. 47 (22 November 2000), 10.

Jesus" is of unprecedented seriousness, because in two thousand years there has never been felt the need to recall and defend such basic truths.⁸⁶

Beside the Introduction and the Conclusion, the text of the Declaration is structured into six chapters. The first three are dealing with Christological issues, the remaining three are devoted to ecclesiology. The text is also divided into 23 numbered paragraphs. The Declaration's table of the contents is as follows:

Introduction (paragraphs 1-4).

Chapter I. The Fullness and Definitiveness of the Revelation of Jesus Christ (5-8).

Chapter II. The Incarnate Logos and the Holy Spirit in the Work of Salvation (9-12).

Chapter III. Unicity and Universality of the Salvific Mystery of Jesus Christ (13-15).

Chapter IV. Unicity and Unity of the Church (16-17).

Chapter V. The Church: Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Christ (18-19).

Chapter VI. The Church and the Other Religions in Relation to Salvation (20-22).

Conclusion (23).

Below, an overview of the contents of *Dominus Iesus* is presented.

Introduction. In the four paragraphs that comprise the Introduction, the purpose and nature of the document are explained. Most of the text in paragraph 1 consists of three lengthy quotations. The first two are Christ's words of commissioning His disciples at the conclusion of the Gospels according to Mark and Matthew. The aim of these quotations is to stress the proclamation of

⁸⁶ Quoted in: MAGISTER, 'John Paul II and the Other Religions', op. cit. (2004).

the Gospel as explicitly commanded by Christ. The third quotation is the full text of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, providing the nucleus of the faith to be proclaimed. It is significant that the Creed is recited without the *Filioque*,⁸⁷ which is an important ecumenical gesture in favour of the Orthodox Churches. Paragraph 2 starts with stressing the current relevancy of the Church's evangelising mission, and goes on with explaining its relationship with the inter-religious dialogue. Paragraph 3 considers the aim of the Declaration, as well as its scope and limits. The Introduction ends with two lists presented in paragraph 4. The first one identifies the nine areas of the Catholic faith that, according to *Dominus Iesus*, are threatened by some theories that arise from religious relativism. The second list specifies several philosophical and theological presuppositions on which those theories are based. The nine areas presented in the first list are directly considered further in *Dominus Iesus*. These areas are:

[1] the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, [2] the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, [3] the inspired nature of the books of Sacred Scripture, [4] the personal unity between the Eternal Word and Jesus of Nazareth, [5] the unity of the economy of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit, [6] the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, [7] the universal salvific mediation of the Church, [8] the inseparability — while recognizing the distinction — of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, and [9] the subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ That is, the article on the procession of the Holy Spirit does not include 'and the Son': 'I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified' (*DI* 1). The fact that the Catholic magisterial document recites the Creed as the contents of the Church's proclamation without the *Filioque* is extremely unusual.

⁸⁸ *DI* 4, numeration added.

These nine doctrinal areas are analysed one by one in the remaining part of the Declaration, which, consequently, could be seen as divided into nine sections.⁸⁹ The basic line of argument within each section consists of the following elements: (1) identification of an error or an ambiguity; (2) restatement of the Church's doctrine in a summarised form; (3) quotations from the biblical sources in support of the restated doctrine; and (4) quotations from the magisterial sources in support of the restated doctrine.⁹⁰ In some cases there are variations within this order. For example, in paragraph 7 the treatment starts with the doctrinal statement, and is followed by biblical and magisterial quotations, while the identification of error is placed at the end. Or, in paragraphs 13-14, error is identified twice—in the beginning and at the end of the treatment.

Christological chapters I-III. Chapter I deals with the first three doctrinal areas as listed in paragraph 4. In regard to the first, the purpose of *Dominus Iesus* is to defend the Church's faith in Christ's revelation as complete and definitive. Then, in relationship to the fullness of Christ's revelation, *Dominus Iesus* considers the second doctrine, which states that *theological faith* in Christianity and *belief* in the other religions are two essentially different forms of human attitude towards the divine reality. The Declaration explains that theological faith represents the grace-enabled assent to Christ's revelation, while belief in the other religions means religious experience still in search for the fullness of truth. The third

⁸⁹ As seen from the Declaration's table of contents presented above, this division into nine sections does not correspond to the formal division of the document into six chapters.

⁹⁰ These four elements are present in each of the nine areas that *DI* deals with, except the treatment of the relationship between the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church in *DI* 18-19. This treatment does not make references to the Bible, but only to the conciliar and the post-conciliar texts.

doctrine asserts that the divine inspiration of the Bible distinguishes it from the sacred writings of the other religions. *Dominus Iesus* says that although 'the sacred books of other religions ... receive from the mystery of Christ the elements of goodness and grace which they contain',⁹¹ it is only the books of the Bible that have God as their author.

Chapter II treats the issues related to the unity of the economy of salvation, and opposes two specific positions that introduce divisions into it. The first one separates Jesus Christ from the Logos, while the second separates the salvific action of Jesus Christ from that of the Holy Spirit. The Declaration censures these positions as contrary to the Catholic faith, and stresses that

There is only one salvific economy of the One and Triune God, realized in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, actualized with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, and extended in its salvific value to all humanity and to the entire universe....⁹²

Chapter III considers the theme of the mediation of salvation, and counters the hypotheses that beside Jesus Christ there exist other mediators of salvation, independent of Him. *Dominus Iesus* stresses that Jesus Christ is the only and the universal mediator of salvation. At the same time, the Declaration points out the possibility of participated mediation, and invites Catholic theology 'to explore if and in what way the historical figures and positive elements of these religions may fall within the divine plan of salvation'.⁹³ In this context, *Dominus Iesus* devotes one paragraph (no. 15) to explaining the theological terminology that describes Christ's mediation of salvation. It states that the terms 'unicity',

⁹¹ DI 8.

⁹² DI 12.

⁹³ DI 14.

‘universality’, and ‘absoluteness’ properly describe Christ’s mediation of salvation, and should not be avoided as if overstressing its significance in comparison to that of the other religions.

Ecclesiological chapters IV-VI. The ecclesiological part of *Dominus Iesus* starts with the same phrase as does the Declaration itself—‘the Lord Jesus’, and emphasises the unique relationship between Christ and the Church:

The Lord Jesus, the only Saviour, did not only establish a simple community of disciples, but constituted the Church as a *salvific mystery*: he himself is in the Church and the Church is in him.... Therefore, the fullness of Christ’s salvific mystery belongs also to the Church, inseparably united to her Lord.⁹⁴

It is on this closest link between Christ and the Church that the ecclesiological doctrines of *Dominus Iesus* are based. They are seen as issuing from the Christological doctrines stated in the previous chapters. Or, in the words of Archbishop Charles Schleck, President of the Pontifical Mission Societies, the ‘Christological affirmations [of *Dominus Iesus*] are completed in coherent *ecclesiological conclusions*’.⁹⁵ Of the three ecclesiological chapters of *Dominus Iesus*, it is only chapter IV that exclusively considers ecumenical issues, i.e., the relationship between the Catholic Church and the other Christian confessions. To explain this relationship, the Declaration starts with the statement of Vatican II: ‘the single Church of Christ ... subsists in [*subsistit in*] the Catholic Church’.⁹⁶

An interpretation of the term *subsistit in* follows:

⁹⁴ *DI* 16.

⁹⁵ SCHLECK, Archbishop C. ‘To National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies: The Declaration “*Dominus Iesus*”’. *L’Osservatore Romano* (weekly edition in English) 1707, no. 35 (29 August 2001), 10.

⁹⁶ *DI* 16, quoting *LG* 8.

With the expression *subsistit in*, the Second Vatican Council sought to harmonize two doctrinal statements: on the one hand, that the Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that 'outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth', that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church.⁹⁷

Further, this chapter makes a distinction between the Orthodox Churches and the other Christian confessions. The former are identified as 'true particular Churches', while the latter are described as 'the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, [and thus] are not Churches in the proper sense'.⁹⁸ At the same time, *Dominus Iesus* stresses that 'these separated Churches and communities ... have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation'.⁹⁹

Chapter V analyses the relationship between the terms 'kingdom of God', 'kingdom of Christ' and 'Church'. The Declaration notes that there may be various interpretations of these terms, but it also warns that none of them can deny the essential link between the realities that they signify. While affirming that 'the kingdom of God—even if considered in its historical phase—is not identified with the Church in her visible and social reality',¹⁰⁰ the Declaration warns of several erroneous conceptions of the kingdom of God that undervalue its relationship with Christ and the Church. Chapter VI analyses the relationship

⁹⁷ *DI* 16, quoting *LG* 8.

⁹⁸ *DI* 17.

⁹⁹ *DI* 17, quoting *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Vatican Council II, Decree on Ecumenism), 1964, 3.

¹⁰⁰ *DI* 19.

between the Church and the non-Christian religions in regard to salvation. It seeks to show the absence of disharmony between the doctrine that 'the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation',¹⁰¹ on the one hand, and God's will to save all people,¹⁰² on the other. While taking for granted the Catholic doctrine that salvation is actually accessible to all people, the Declaration stresses the Church's mediatory role in the salvation of non-Christians: 'the salvific grace of God ... is always given by means of Christ in the Spirit and has a mysterious relationship to the Church'.¹⁰³ *Dominus Iesus* acknowledges the positive value of the non-Christian religions, and admits their possible contribution towards the salvation of their followers. However, on the basis of the unique relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church, and the consequent universality of the Church's mediation, the Declaration makes conclusions that directly oppose religious relativism:

it would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as *one way* of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the Church or substantially equivalent to her....¹⁰⁴

If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.¹⁰⁵

According to *Dominus Iesus*, this is the reason why the Gospel has to be proclaimed and the necessity of conversion to Christ must be announced.

¹⁰¹ *DI* 20, quoting *LG* 14.

¹⁰² *DI* 20 makes reference to *1 Timothy* 2:4, as one of the main biblical sources of this doctrine: '[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth'.

¹⁰³ *DI* 21.

¹⁰⁴ *DI* 21.

¹⁰⁵ *DI* 22.

Conclusion and footnotes. The Conclusion of *Dominus Iesus* repeats its intention to reiterate and clarify the previous magisterial teaching, as well as its exhortation to Catholic theology to confirm the Catholic doctrine reasserted in the Declaration. It ends with restating the unique and universal role of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church in the salvation of all people. The Conclusion is followed by the ratification formula and the signatures of prefect Cardinal Ratzinger and secretary Archbishop Bertone.

The Declaration includes 102 footnotes, mostly references to magisterial documents. Totally, *Dominus Iesus* makes about 130 references to over thirty different documents (beside the biblical references, which are placed in the text itself, not in the footnotes). The most frequent references are to the following documents: the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (twenty-six references), the constitution *Lumen Gentium* (twenty-two references), the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* (ten references), the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (eight references), the constitution *Dei Verbum* (seven references), the encyclical *Fides et ratio* (seven references). At the same time, the pre-Vatican II sources are referred to less than twenty times all in all. So, the references clearly show the Declaration's sure reliance on the conciliar and post-conciliar documents. In fact, explicit quotations from these documents constitute about one third of the Declaration's text!¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ In the English translation of *DI*, the quotations constitute about 44% percent of the text (about 4,000 words out of 9,027). Of them all, the quotations from the documents of Vatican II and from the post-conciliar Magisterium each make 16% of the text. The quotations from the Bible comprise 8%, and the quotations from pre-Vatican II sources occupy 4% of the text.

3.5 The Theological Links between *Dominus Iesus* and Fr Aleksandr Men'

Before analysing Aleksandr Men''s views in the light of *Dominus Iesus*, the final step has to be made: it is necessary to establish the links that make their positions comparable. There is little in common between the immediate historical and theological background of *Dominus Iesus* and that of Men'. He could hardly have been influenced by the same factors that had shaped the Catholic Church's relationship with the other religions in the period from Vatican II to *Dominus Iesus*. Men' was certainly well aware of Vatican II, and he highly approved of it, but the Council did not significantly influence his position on the world's religions. Although most of his books on this topic were written during the 1960s, i.e., at the time of the Council, their basic concept had been formed a whole decade earlier. Naturally, Men' was even less affected by the evolution of the Catholic Church's attitude towards the other religions after Vatican II. As shown in chapter 2, Men''s views on the religions of the world were primarily influenced by Solovyov, Berdyayev, Jaspers and Dawson. *Dominus Iesus*, on the other hand, resulted from the conciliar and post-conciliar developments of the Catholic doctrine on the non-biblical religions. Thus no direct relationship can be traced between the influences on Men' and those processes that ultimately led to *Dominus Iesus*.

As it is seen from the analysis in chapter 2, Men' has developed a systematic and well-defined theological views on the non-biblical religions that can be evaluated in the light of *Dominus Iesus*. Naturally, not all of the guidelines of the Declaration are used in the present analysis of Men''s works. Some of them are irrelevant. For example, Men' does not discuss the relationships between the

kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, or the relationship between the economy of the Incarnate Word and that of the Holy Spirit. Besides, some of the principles presented in *Dominus Iesus* are excluded from the present analysis by its scope and limits. This primarily concerns the ecumenical and the ecclesiological issues. Although Men` has developed a definite position on the relationship between different Christian confessions, this study is only concerned with his views on the other religions. The question of the universality of the Church's mediation is also excluded. Although Men` was dealing with the role of the Church, he did not discuss that in relationship with the non-biblical religions, which is the focus of *Dominus Iesus*. Finally, this thesis does not evaluate Men`s understanding of the inspired nature of the Bible as making it different from the sacred writings of the other religions. This question is excluded because of its width. If included, it should have to study such broad themes as the Catholic doctrine on biblical inspiration and inerrancy, which are also indicated by *Dominus Iesus*. Besides, in this case the whole corpus of Men`s works on the biblical issues should be analysed, including his three volume *Dictionary of the Bible*. Such analysis would be a sufficient subject for a separate thesis.

The following chapters 4-6 of this study will analyse Men`s works in the light of the guidelines presented in four out of the nine doctrinal areas addressed by *Dominus Iesus*, namely, nos. 1, 2, 4 and 6:

- [1] the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ,
- [2] the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, ...
- [4] the personal unity between the Eternal Word and Jesus of

Nazareth, ... [6] the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ....¹⁰⁷

The analysis will be presented as follows: chapter 4 will examine Men's works in the light of the principles outlined in the doctrinal areas nos. 4 and 6. These areas deal with several aspects of the uniqueness of the Person of Christ, which is the issue of fundamental importance for Men as well. The uniqueness of Christ constitutes the foundation for the uniqueness of His revelation, which will be considered in chapter 5. It will analyse Men's understanding of the definitiveness and completeness of Christ's revelation, as indicated in doctrinal area no. 1. Chapter 6, the final one, will consider Men's views on the uniqueness of theological faith as human response to Christ and His revelation (doctrinal area no. 2). These three chapters could be seen as attempting to answer the following question: had Aleksandr Men been a Catholic theologian writing at the time after *Dominus Iesus*, would his views have to be censured by this document?

¹⁰⁷ DI 4.

Part Two

EVALUATING ALEKSANDR MEN'S POSITION WITH REGARD TO SOME SPECIFIC ISSUES

CHAPTER 4. ALEKSANDR MEN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE POSITION OF JESUS CHRIST AMONG THE LEADERS OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

4.1 Introduction

The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* emphasises the unique position of Jesus Christ among the founders, reformers, and other leaders of the world's religions. The aim of chapter 4 is to compare Men's view of this issue with the guidelines of *Dominus Iesus*. As has been indicated in 3.4, the Declaration is explicitly concerned with clarifying the Catholic Church's faith with regard to two specific areas: the unique relationship between Jesus Christ and the Logos, and the uniqueness and universality of salvation offered by Jesus Christ.¹ Beside these two issues, there is another constantly referred to throughout the document, namely, the divinity of Christ. Although it is not listed among the nine areas addressed by *Dominus Iesus*, in fact it constitutes the foundation for all the other questions raised by the Declaration. Therefore, the present chapter starts with an analysis of Men's view of Jesus Christ's divinity as differentiating Him from the other leaders of the world's religions (section 4.2). Then, there will follow an analysis of Men's understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ's relationship with the Logos (4.3), and of Christ's uniqueness as the Saviour of the world (4.4).

For analysis in this chapter, the founders, reformers and other leaders of the world's religions will be referred to as *religious leaders*. This term here includes a broad spectrum of historical personalities described in Men's works—from

¹ See DI 4.

major founders and reformers of world religions (such as Buddha and Zoroaster), to less known or even anonymous individuals (e.g., guru Patanjali of the 2nd cent. B.C. and the authors of the Upanishads). Since *Dominus Iesus* deals only with the relationship between historical personalities and Christ, the main distinctive feature of a *religious leader* is his or her *historicity*. Thus, the term *religious leader* does not include mythical or semi-historical personages, such as Prometheus or Gilgamesh.

4.2 Men's View of Religious Leaders with Regard to Their Relationship to God

The Declaration repeatedly stresses the conviction of the Catholic Church that Jesus of Nazareth is a unique Person—'truly God and truly man',² 'the Word of God made man for the salvation of all',³ 'true God from true God',⁴ the 'only begotten Son of the Father',⁵ etc. According to the Declaration, Christ's divinity distinguishes him from all the other religious leaders. Because of this, *Dominus Iesus* notes, the faith of the Catholic Church cannot be reconciled with

an approach to Jesus of Nazareth that considers him a particular, finite, historical figure, who reveals the divine not in an exclusive way, but in a way complementary with other revelatory and salvific figures. The Infinite, the Absolute, the Ultimate Mystery of God would thus manifest itself to humanity in many ways and in many historical figures: Jesus of Nazareth would be one of these.⁶

² *DI* 10. Quoting: Council of Chalcedon, *Symbolum Chalcedonense: Denzinger-Schönmetzer, Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (1965) 301.

³ *DI* 10. Quoting *RM* 6.

⁴ *DI* 10. Quoting: First Council of Nicaea, *Symbolum Nicaenum: Denzinger-Schönmetzer, Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (1965) 125.

⁵ *DI* 10. Quoting *John* 1:18.

⁶ *DI* 9.

The following subsection 4.2.1 aims at determining the most fundamental aspects of Aleksandr Men's Christology, in particular his views on Jesus Christ's divinity. Subsection 4.2.2 analyses Men's understanding of the place that Jesus as true man and true God has among the other religious leaders.

4.2.1 The Basic Aspects of Men's Christological Position

Men presents his Christological position in a systematic way in the volume *Son of Man* as well as in his series of seven lectures on the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.⁷ While explaining the Creed, Men reiterates the main Christological doctrines, e.g., the true divinity and true humanity of Christ, His divine sonship, His role as the Saviour and the Messiah, etc.⁸ Men does not make any separation between historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. He attributes all Christological dogmatic statements directly to Jesus of Nazareth: 'The Infinite and the All-Embracing assumed a human face and a human voice in the Carpenter from Nazareth'.⁹ This same position is explicitly stated in *Dominus Iesus*: 'Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth'.¹⁰ As Men's position on this fundamental issue is identical to that of the Declaration, their views on Jesus Christ essentially coincide in subsequent areas also. Both Men

⁷ МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN, Aleksandr]. *Сын Человеческий [Son of Man]*. Брюссель: Жизнь с Богом, 1983. Hereafter quoted as *Son*. МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN, Aleksandr]. *Верую... Беседы о Никео-Царьградском Символе веры*. Ред. Марина НАСОНОВА, Роза АДАМЯНЦ, Павел МЕНЬ [I Believe... Discussions on the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Eds. Marina NASONOVA, Roza ADAMYANTZ, Pavel MEN]. Москва: Храм Святых бессребреников Космы и Дамияна в Шубине, 2001. Hereafter quoted as *Creed*. Both volumes are available in English. The lectures are published in English under the title *Seven Talks on the Creed*. See Select Bibliography for publication details.

⁸ See *Creed*, pp. 34-116.

⁹ *Son*, p. 183.

¹⁰ *DI* 10. Quoting *RM* 6.

and the Declaration use the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed as an essential starting point for understanding Jesus Christ.¹¹ In his descriptions of Christ, Men` especially emphasises His true divinity and true humanity. On the words of Men`, Jesus

ate and drank, rejoiced and suffered, experienced temptation and death. At the same time He, the one without sin, forgave sinners as God alone forgives, and never separated Himself from the Father....¹²

Men` maintains that the basic uniqueness of Jesus consists in His very special relationship with God. To describe this relationship, Men` uses the traditional Christian term *consubstantial* (Gk. *homoousios*):

He is *homoousios* to the Father. This does not mean another God, or a being which is lower than the Creator. This means the same God, one in His substance.¹³

No man is consubstantial to the Father, He [i.e., Jesus of Nazareth] alone is.¹⁴

In general, Men``s descriptions of Jesus Christ are in line with the traditional Christology, which also constitutes the essence in the current official teachings of both the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. The only significant difference between the two Churches is the *Filioque* issue. As can be expected, Fr Men` follows the Orthodox formulation: 'I believe in the Holy Spirit ... who proceeds from the Father; with the Father and the Son he is worshipped'.¹⁵ Although this differs from the commonly accepted Catholic articulation ('who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*'), the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that from

¹¹ *DI* begins with reciting the Creed (see *DI* 1).

¹² *Son*, pp. 184-185.

¹³ *Creed*, p. 91.

¹⁴ *Creed*, p. 77.

¹⁵ *Creed*, p. 117.

the Catholic perspective both expressions are valid and complementary: 'This legitimate complementarity, provided it does not become rigid, does not affect the identity of faith in the reality of the same mystery confessed'.¹⁶ As it has been noted, *DI* also recites this Creed without the *Filioque*. But this doctrinal issue does not pertain directly to the present research, so it is not analysed here any further.

From the doctrinal position, Men's view of Christ has been severely criticised by an Orthodox laywoman known as E. N. In the early 1970s, she wrote a review of Men's book *Son of Man*, and accused him of such heresies as Arianism and Docetism.¹⁷ In his reply, Men rejected these charges. He pointed out that most of *Son of Man* had been published in various Orthodox periodicals, including the official *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, and it was met with approval. Maslenikova notes that after receiving Fr Men's reply E. N. 'accepted his arguments and gave up her charges'.¹⁸ Another criticism against Men's Christology was levelled by Sergey Antiminsov. In his article 'Archpriest Aleksandr Men' as a Commentator of the Sacred Scripture', Antiminsov asserts that Men's writings contain numerous Arian, Manichaean, Pelagian and Nestorian ideas. However, Antiminsov's emotionally charged criticism often lacks evidence. For example, he accuses Men' of Arianism, for, on the words of

¹⁶ CCC 248.

¹⁷ She is identified as E. N. (transliterated from Russian E. H.) in Men's reply to her: МЕНЬ [MEN'], 'Letter to E. N.', op. cit. (1991), pp. 182-202. In the same article Men' indicates that there existed another negative evaluation of *Son* (p. 192). My attempts of locating the texts of these two critical reviews were not successful. Most probably, they have never been made publicly available. The nature of E. N.'s criticism can be partially inferred from Men's reply to her (for example, Arianism and Docetism are mentioned on p. 183).

¹⁸ *Life*, p. 247.

Antiminsov, Men` upholds that 'Christ was liable to sin (Russ. *подвержен греху*) (*Son of Man*, p. 70), and suffered on the cross as a mere man (*Son of Man*, p. 294).¹⁹ However, a closer look at these texts shows that in reality there is nothing heretical in them. On p. 70 in *Son of Man*, Men` describes Christ's baptism in Jordan and His temptations in the desert, but does not give any hint that Christ could in any be way liable to sin. On p. 294, Men` presents a vivid description of Christ's suffering on the cross, and of the subsequent confusion of the apostles. Again, the description does not make any suggestion about Jesus Christ not being divine. Quite the contrary becomes especially clear in the context of Men``s other descriptions of Christ. A small part of Antiminsov's criticism is levelled at Men``s explanations that are indeed disputable from the theological point of view, but in those cases his conclusions are clearly exaggerated. For example, he accuses Men` of Manichaeism, for, according to Antiminsov, Men` views 'the world as created in the struggle of good and evil powers (*Magism and Monotheism*, p. 594; *How to Read the Bible*, pp. 30-31).²⁰ However, neither in these texts, nor in his other works, Men` speaks of creation as resulting from the struggle of good and evil as two equal powers. Without doubt, Men` sees God as absolutely powerful and good. At the same time, while interpreting the story of creation in the first chapter of *Genesis*, Men` does state that God's creative action encountered some resistance on the part of the fallen angelic *creatures* that had been *created* before. This position would in fact be at some variance with the traditional Christian (as well as the official Catholic)

¹⁹ АНТИМИНСОВ [ANTIMINSOV], op. cit. (1999), p. 34.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33. Here Antiminsov refers to Men``s one-volume *Как читать Библию. Руководство к чтению книг Ветхого Завета* [*How to read the Bible. A Guide to Reading the Books of the Old Testament*]. Брюссель: Жизнь с Богом, 1981.

doctrine of creation, but that is not sufficient for labelling Men's position as Manichaeism.²¹ In general, Antiminov's criticism is, at best, excessive, while bishop Sigris dismisses it fully as

one of many representing a genre once overtly produced by the KGB, the methodology of which is, in general, to throw up a lot of dirt, hoping that some will stick.... First of all, reading the book [containing the article by Antiminov], one is reminded of C.S. Lewis's "Preface to 'Paradise Lost'", which begins with a list of theological complaints against Milton and ends by showing that the listed items are either not in 'Paradise Lost' or are not heretical. Such is the case with Men. The alleged Christological heresies are not there.²²

From the point of view of the present study, Men's Christological position hardly received any significant criticism.

4.2.2 Men's View of Jesus Christ's Position among the Other Religious Leaders with Regard to Their Relationship to God

The texts where Men explicitly compares Jesus Christ with the other religious leaders are scattered throughout his writings and appear to be rather numerous. Although mainly Men points out fundamental differences between Jesus and the others, he also indicates some important features that are common to all of them. These common features naturally follow from the true humanity of Jesus, which is often emphasised in Men's description. First, to Men Jesus is a *religious leader*. That is, He is one of the historical personalities who, according to Men, have made a significant impact on the history of religions. For example, Men includes and discusses Jesus among the other religious leaders while

²¹ For the current Catholic understanding of the doctrine of creation see CCC 279-421. Since this doctrinal point is not directly addressed by *DI*, it is not analysed in the present study any further.

²² SIGRIS, 'In Response', op. cit. (2004).

giving one of his interviews.²³ Men` calls Jesus 'the Founder of Christianity',²⁴ which places Him side by side with the founders of the other religions, such as Buddha,²⁵ for example. While describing the immediate context of Jesus' earthly life, Men` mentions many other features that were in common between Him and various groups of the Jewish religious leaders, such as prophets, rabbis, Pharisees, etc.

As shown in the previous subsection, Men` maintains that Christ is unique among the people of the world primarily because of His divinity—He is 'consubstantial to the Father'.²⁶ The remaining differences between Him and the others are shown as originating from this. These subsequent differences are closely interrelated. They can be grouped into following areas: Christ's unique position as the Messiah; the uniqueness of Christ's resurrection and His presence in the world after the end of His earthly life; Christ's unique relationship with the ultimate truth; the unique perfection of Christ's human nature; Christ's unique role in the world's spiritual processes. Separate aspects of these differences are evaluated below. Beside these specific differences, the very fact that Men` constantly compares Jesus to the other religious leaders, constitutes a separate item of His distinction. Men` compares Jesus to others much more often than any other religious leaders are compared among themselves. Thus,

²³ See *Interview*, pp. 4-6.

²⁴ *Interview*, p. 6. See also *Son*, p. 12.

²⁵ See, for example, *Answers*, p. 317, *Gates*, p. 195.

²⁶ *Son*, p. 216.

the other religious leaders are treated as comprising a group that can be set in an opposition to Jesus of Nazareth.

Men` often emphasises that, differently from Jesus, the other religious leaders are mere human beings:

A wide abyss suddenly opens between the Son of Man and the other philosophers, teachers of morals, or founders of religions.

Even if Jesus lived and acted as a prophet, the things he has revealed about Himself does not allow us to treat Him like the other world teachers. All of them saw themselves as *human beings* only, as people who had found the truth and were called to proclaim it. They could clearly see the distance that separated them from ... [God].²⁷ But what about Jesus?... This Teacher, devoid of all falsehood or exaltation ... speaks not just as a prophet, not in the name of ... [God] only, but as ... [God] Himself...²⁸

In various contexts Men` emphasises that it is Christ's divinity that creates essential difference between Him and any other religious leader. For example, Men` contrasts Jesus to the others by stressing the great distance between them and the Absolute:

'I am the way, and the truth, and the life'—while uttering these words, the Nazarene is not just 'one of the men', not even the greatest among them. The other spiritual leaders—Moses or Jeremiah, Socrates or Zoroaster—had realised their human weakness and sinfulness; they saw the great distance that separated them from the Supreme Being (Russ. *верховное бытие*). For Christ, however, such a distance does not exist....²⁹

Differently from Jesus, Men` portrays the non-biblical religious leaders as human beings who either strive after a closer relationship with God (e.g., Lao-tzu and

²⁷ Here Men` inserts an endnote for pre-empting a potential objection that in Hinduism and other related religions the union between man and the Absolute is viewed as achievable: 'If the sages of India sometimes spoke of their union with Deity, this followed from their theology, which saw God as the inner principle of everything that exists' (Son, p. 424). Men` stresses that this union is treated differently by Christianity and by Hinduism.

²⁸ Son, p. 177. Men` italicised *human beings* to stress Christ's divinity.

²⁹ *Threshold*, p. 578. Men` here again cautions that Christ's words should not be interpreted in a pantheistic sense. See also *Christianity*, p. 23.

Socrates), or are trying to find ultimate happiness without God (e.g., Confucius and Democritus).

Men` also points out how Christ's testimony about His own divinity distinguishes Him from the other religious leaders. He alone 'speaks the way no sage ever dared: "He who has seen me has seen the Father".³⁰ Men` states that Christ's claims are so radical that they allow only very extreme possibilities of His identity. This is what Men` says about Christ's words 'before Abraham was, I am':³¹

I AM... This could only be said by ... [God]. This is His secret name.... And now ... [these sacred words] are uttered by the Nazarene!... Hesitations are over. Either He is a liar and a blasphemer, or it is God Himself speaking through His lips.³²

Men` views the divine nature of Jesus as closely related to His divine sonship. According to Men`, this also makes an essential difference between Jesus and the other people:

He calls all believers 'sons', but ... He makes it clear that His sonship is different.... He is the only Son and the Lord of the Kingdom, and no human being shares this position with Him.³³

Men` stresses that the messianic expectations of the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah:

A number of Jews had believed that besides Messiah the King there would come Messiah the High Priest and Messiah the Prophet. Jesus unites the three in Himself.... He is the Anointed One who possesses the absolute fullness of authority.³⁴

³⁰ *Threshold*, pp. 578-579.

³¹ *John* 8:58.

³² *Son*, p. 205.

³³ *Son*, p. 132.

³⁴ *Son*, p. 133.

In his *Dictionary of the Bible* Men` describes numerous false claims to the title of the Messiah.³⁵ This title, Men` maintains, rightly belongs to Jesus of Nazareth alone, so this is what differentiates Him from any other religious leader.

Closely related to both the divinity and the humanity of Christ is His resurrection and His unique presence in the world after His earthly life is over. For Men`, Christ's resurrection is the event 'unprecedented and unique'³⁶ in history. It is the foundation of Christ's unique presence with the disciples:

If Christ *existed* in the same way as Socrates did, all we could have now would be just a memory about Him. However, Christ *not merely was*; He remains with us until the end of times. The Resurrection ... transfers the Gospel events into a dimension that is conspicuous from every spot and every century in the world.³⁷

Men` stresses repeatedly that this presence of Christ is essentially different from the *memory* about the other religious leaders:

Christ's appearance before His disciples was not just a memory about Him. Such a memory existed about the prophet Isaiah, as well as about the great teachers of mankind and the great philosophers. But this was not the case with Christ.... He appeared before them alive.... Moses became immortal due to legends and memories, but no one says that he appeared alive.³⁸

Christ's divinity has distinguished Him from the other religious leaders in His relationship to the ultimate truth, too. Men` emphasises that religious leaders were making great efforts at acquiring this truth:

The great teachers of humanity, such as the authors of the Upanishads, Lao-tzu, Confucius, Buddha, Muhammad, Socrates, Plato and others,

³⁵ See *Dictionary*, vol. 2, pp. 127-128.

³⁶ *Dialogue*, p. 225.

³⁷ МЕНЬ [MEN`], op. cit. (2002), p. 10.

³⁸ *Creed*, p. 179. See also *Son*, p. 304.

treated the truth like the peak of a mountain, which could be reached with greatest difficulties.³⁹

But Jesus of Nazareth, Men` asserts, is in a fundamentally different position:

When we turn to the Gospel, we discover a world that has nothing to do with an exciting searching or striving towards heaven. We find that we are facing ... *the answer*.

It took Prince Siddhartha Gautama—the future Buddha—... [long] years of ascetical labour to attain his Enlightenment (Russ. *созерцание*). The same can be said about the intellectual, spiritual or psychophysical efforts of the yogis, philosophers and ascetics. But Jesus Christ comes from an ordinary village where He had lived a very ordinary life. All that He had was already there, inside Him. He did not [try to] ascend anywhere. On the contrary, He descended to the people.... He never showed any awareness of having achieved something. He came to the people and brought them what He had had by nature from the very beginning.⁴⁰

Differently from Jesus, all the non-biblical religious leaders are described by Men` as *seekers* of the ultimate truth—either by intellectual efforts (e.g., Aristotle), or through contemplation and mystical pursuit (e.g., the Orphics and the authors of the Upanishads), or by combining both (e.g., Pythagoras).

Beside Christ's divinity, Men` also points out some important aspects of His humanity as unique in comparison with the other religious leaders. Men` especially stresses that Christ never feels any sinfulness: 'All great saints saw themselves as sinners.... The only person in history who never mentioned His own sins is Jesus the Nazarene.'⁴¹ According to Men`, Christ's human nature has never been demolished by sin, so it was free from inner conflicts or discord found in the lives of the other religious leaders: 'In Jesus Christ we do not see any inner struggle or perception of his own sinfulness which is typical of the

³⁹ *Christianity*, p. 18.

⁴⁰ *Christianity*, p. 19.

⁴¹ *Creed*, pp. 77-78.

saints and mystics of all times.⁴² Men` also indicates the absence of all negative traits in the portrait of Christ in the Gospels. In spite of that, as Men` justly says, His portrait does not seem fictitious, which is unique from the literary point of view, too:

No writer has ever succeeded in creating a persuasive image of a [positive] hero if the portrait did not also ... [include] shortcomings. The Gospel writers, however, are an exception. This is not due to their unmatched artistic skills, but because the Personality that they described was truly unmatched.⁴³

Finally, Men` indicates the uniqueness of Jesus Christ on the level of broad cultural and religious processes of the world. He discerns three turning points there, namely, (a) the activity of the great teachers in the middle of the first millennium B.C., (b) the life of Christ, and (c) the rise of secular humanism in the 16th-17th cent. A.D. Men` sees the great teachers and the protagonists of secular humanism as elements of broad processes, for 'both movements occurred simultaneously in many countries', while Jesus of Nazareth, as Men` argues, is nothing of the sort:

'the Evangelic revolution' is unique. In the period of Augustus and Tiberius, no one could bear a slightest resemblance to Jesus the Nazarene. His coming, therefore, cannot be regarded as a mere part of the general spiritual process.⁴⁴

One of the most appreciative titles given by Men` to a non-biblical religious leader is that of a 'Christian before Christ'. For example, having summarised the positive qualities of Socrates, Men` remarks: "It was not accidental that the

⁴² *Answers*, p. 311.

⁴³ *Son*, p. 78.

⁴⁴ *Threshold*, p. 665.

Church Fathers numbered Socrates among the 'Christians before Christ'.⁴⁵

Men` says that there were some other 'Christians before Christ', too:

Long before His incarnation, the Logos ... was gradually revealing the truth to the people. Like the Jewish righteous men, who had been servants of the Word or 'Christians before Christ', similarly the Greek sages (Russ. эллинские мудрецы) could have been ... ['Christians before Christ'], too, had they heeded the voice of God.⁴⁶

This quotation shows that for Men` the distinctive feature of 'Christians before Christ' is listening to and obeying the divine Word. As it will be shown in section 4.3, Men` associates the divine Word with Jesus of Nazareth exclusively, and maintains that Jesus is the Word incarnated. Thus Men` equates the 'Christians before Christ' to Jesus' disciples who believed in Him after His Resurrection. The latter ones were certainly fully dependent upon Jesus as their Teacher and Saviour. Therefore, Men``s usage of the title 'Christians before Christ' confirms that he never viewed the non-biblical religious leaders as able to share the same position as Jesus Christ.

4.3 Men``s View of Religious Leaders with Regard to Their Relationship to the Logos

Dominus Iesus stresses the personal identity of Jesus Christ with the Logos, and views this identity as differentiating Jesus from the other religious leaders.

The Declaration censures the view that Jesus, alongside with the other religious

⁴⁵ *Dionysus*, p. 225. Men` also explicitly mentions Heracleitus as a 'Christian before Christ'. Men` uses this title only when directly referring to Church Fathers, in particular St Justin Martyr. St Justin speaks of Socrates and Heracleitus this way in: JUSTIN MARTYR. 'The First Apology' 46. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers (volume 1). The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, eds., transl. Alexander ROBERTS, James DONALDSON, 178. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995.

⁴⁶ *Dionysus*, p. 8. Also, in *Answers* Men` says that 'Socrates and the other sages of antiquity (Russ. мудрецы античности) are Christians before Christ' (*Answers*, p. 252).

leaders, is merely 'one of the many faces which the Logos has assumed in the course of time'.⁴⁷ In response to this position the Declaration emphasises that

Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, and he alone, is the Son and the Word of the Father. The Word, which 'was in the beginning with God' (*John* 1:2) is the same as he who 'became flesh' (*John* 1:14).⁴⁸

Aleksandr Men' often speaks of the action of the Logos (Russ. *Логос*), or the divine Word (Russ. *Слово Божие*). While referring to God's activity in the world, Men' uses the terms *Word* and *Logos* (*word, reason* in Greek) interchangeably.⁴⁹ Men''s idea of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Logos is displayed in two related areas of theology, namely, dogmatics and the history of salvation. In the first area, Men''s position regarding the Logos is the same as that of the traditional Christian theology, which identifies the Logos with the Second Person of the Trinity, as seen, for example, from the following statement of Clement of Alexandria: 'There is one Father of the universe, one Logos of the universe, and also one Holy Spirit, everywhere one and the same'.⁵⁰ Men''s position is exactly the same:

God as the Father is the fundamental principle (Russ. *первооснова*) of everything, and God as the Logos, or the Word (the same God), is the Creator of everything.... God as the Spirit is the Sustainer....⁵¹

In line with the traditional dogmatic theology, Men' also identifies the Second Person of the Trinity with Jesus Christ. In his explanation of the Niceno-

⁴⁷ DI 9.

⁴⁸ DI 10.

⁴⁹ See, for instance: *Magism*, p. 572; *Gates*, p. 88; *Dionysus*, p. 8; *Threshold*, p. 495; МЕНЬ [MEN'], *Russian Philosophy of Religion*, op. cit. (2003), p. 58. In Men''s works the *Word* can also mean the Bible as the written Word of God (see, for example, *Magism*, p. 485).

⁵⁰ Quoted in CCC 813, from: ST CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA *Paedagogus*, 1, 6, 42: *Patrologia Graeca*, J. P. MIGNE, ed. Paris, 1857-1866, 8, 300.

⁵¹ *Creed*, p. 119.

Constantinopolitan Creed, Men` directly states that Jesus is 'the Second Person of the Holy Trinity'.⁵²

Beside identifying Jesus with the Logos in the explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, Men` stresses their personal identity while interpreting the history of salvation. According to Men`, the activity of the Logos

is found everywhere whenever man turns to ... [God]. Throughout the history of religions, the *dialogue* between God and man continues.... This dialogue between God and man reaches its peak in ... the personal entrance of the Logos into the noosphere [i.e., the Incarnation].... There is a good reason for the demons' trembling when He walks the roads of Galilee.⁵³

This quotation shows clearly that Men` identifies the Logos with Jesus of Nazareth, for it was He who walked 'the roads of Galilee'. In another place Men` explicitly identifies Jesus Christ with the Logos who acts in the history of religions: 'Any striving towards ... God means striving ... towards [Jesus] Christ.... The divine Word has always been present in history and it has awakened higher aspirations in the people'.⁵⁴ Thus, Men``s attitude towards Christ's action in the non-biblical religions is in line with the Catholic position expressed in *Dominus Iesus*:

In the process of discovering and appreciating the manifold gifts—especially the spiritual treasures—that God has bestowed on every people, we cannot separate those gifts from Jesus Christ, who is at the centre of God's plan of salvation.⁵⁵

⁵² *Creed*, p. 99.

⁵³ *Magism*, p. 596.

⁵⁴ *Threshold*, p. 666. Here Men` makes reference to St Clement of Alexandria as supporting this position.

⁵⁵ *DI* 10. Quoting *RM* 6.

Therefore, Men's views in the area of dogmatic theology and that of the history of salvation reveal his faith in the personal identity of the Logos with Jesus of Nazareth. In Men's writings, Jesus of Nazareth is the only historical figure to whom the Logos is thus related. If Men speaks of the action of the Logos without direct reference to Jesus, the closest relationship between them is nevertheless implied.⁵⁶ At the same time, Men gives no indications of considering any other religious leader as 'one of the many faces which the Logos has assumed in the course of time'.⁵⁷ Men does mention significant ideas about the Logos in some non-biblical religions as, for example, in the image of the Egyptian deity *Ptah*,⁵⁸ in the teachings of Heracleitus and the Stoics,⁵⁹ or in the teaching of the Bhagavadgita on the origin of the universe.⁶⁰ However, even though various religious leaders have had important insights about the Logos, none of the historical personalities is described by Men as having any kind of personal union with the Logos, and much less being His incarnation, as is the case with Jesus Christ. In summary, Men's understanding of the uniqueness of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Logos is in line with the position on this issue stated in *Dominus Iesus*.

⁵⁶ See, for example, *Magism*, pp. 571-577 and 592-600.

⁵⁷ *DI* 9.

⁵⁸ See *Magism*, p. 97.

⁵⁹ See *Dionysus*, p. 112 ff.; *Threshold*, p. 131 ff.

⁶⁰ See *Gates*, p. 104.

4.4 Men's View of Religious Leaders with Regard to the Mediation of Salvation

Dominus Iesus clarifies the relationship between the mediation of salvation by Jesus Christ and that by the other religious leaders, and emphasises that Jesus is the one and only Saviour of the world:

the universal salvific will of the One and Triune God is offered and accomplished once for all in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God.⁶¹

Consequently, the attitude which 'denies the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ'⁶² is identified as incompatible with the faith of the Catholic Church. At the same time, the Declaration explains that this unique mediation of Christ permits many forms of participated mediation, which are always rooted in Christ's mediation:

'Although participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value *only* from Christ's own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his'. Hence, those solutions that propose a salvific action of God beyond the unique mediation of Christ would be contrary to Christian and Catholic faith.⁶³

It is the mediation of salvation by Jesus Christ alone that Men` discusses in detail. While describing the other religious leaders, he seldom speaks about them as mediators of salvation, and he does not directly speak of participated mediation either. Nevertheless, Men`s position on their role can be deduced from some of his other descriptions. The present section does not discuss Men`s views on those religions, which understand salvation as mediated by mythological or semi-mythological saviours, as, for instance, in Krishnaism,

⁶¹ *DI* 14.

⁶² *DI* 13.

⁶³ *DI* 14. Quoting *RM* 5.

Orphism or Mithraism. In line with the definition of a *religious leader*,⁶⁴ it is only historical personalities that are considered here in reference to the mediation of salvation. The analysis starts with an assessment of Men's concept of Christ's salvific mediation (subsection 4.4.1). Further, Men's view of the possibility for non-biblical religious leaders to be mediators of salvation is evaluated (4.4.2).

4.4.1 Men's Understanding of Jesus Christ's Salvific Mediation

On several occasions Men explicitly explains his understanding of salvation. In his lecture 'Christianity' he says that to achieve salvation means

to unite our ephemeral and temporal life with immortality and with God Himself.... [Salvation means] union with the divine life.... This union with the divine life is possible only through the faith in Jesus Christ.⁶⁵

A similar definition is found in Men's *Dictionary of the Bible*:

Salvation means personal union [with God]. It is not dissolution of the world in God.... This union of a human person with the personal Deity is possible through Jesus Christ alone.... In the life and death of Jesus Christ God unites Himself with the sufferings of the world, and His sufferings become the guarantee and the gate into salvation for humanity.... The human person is saved ... only when he entrusts himself to Christ as Abraham once entrusted himself to God....⁶⁶

In *Dominus Iesus* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* salvation is first of all related to a close personal relationship between God and man:

The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men 'and reconciles and *unites with himself* those who turn away from sin'.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ See 4.1, above.

⁶⁵ *Christianity*, p. 27.

⁶⁶ *Dictionary*, vol. 3, p. 147.

⁶⁷ CCC 234, emphasis added. Quoting PAUL VI. *General Catechetical Directory*, 1971, 47.

Similarly to Men`, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* stresses that salvation does not only restore what was lost by sin, but also makes possible a most intimate relationship between God and man: 'The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity.'⁶⁸ *Dominus Iesus* highlights the central role of Jesus Christ in salvation:

In fact, the truth of Jesus Christ ... who through the event of his incarnation, death and resurrection has brought the history of salvation to fulfilment, and which has in him its fullness and centre, must be *firmly believed* as a constant element of the Church's faith.⁶⁹

The gift of salvation has to be accepted freely by faith: 'Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation.'⁷⁰ These quotations from Men`s works and the magisterial documents reveal three key aspects that are common to their understanding of salvation: (1) salvation is God's gift of close personal relationship with Him; (2) God's saving action culminates in Jesus Christ; (3) on man's part salvation has to be accepted by faith. Thus, Men`s view of salvation is principally in line with the Catholic position.

Men` emphasises that it was only in the last millennium B.C. that the idea of salvation fully emerged in the history of religions. Men` thinks that the reason why it appeared so late lies in 'the pagan consciousness [that] was conceiving the world as static and unchanging'.⁷¹ Before that, Men` maintains, it had existed

⁶⁸ CCC 260.

⁶⁹ DI 13.

⁷⁰ CCC 161.

⁷¹ *Dictionary*, vol. 3, p. 145.

in a germinal form only, as a belief that supernatural forces could deliver man from certain adversities in this life, and, occasionally, after death as well. Men` reduces the ideas of salvation during the last millennium B.C. to three main types:

Some saw a way out in a better organisation of the society (Plato), and some others—in mystical contemplation and in a flight from life (Buddha). However, both solutions had a common presupposition that neither man nor Deity were capable of bringing about radical changes in the arrangement of the world.... The third type of soteriology emerged in Israel and Iran. There existed [in those countries] ... a certitude that evil could be defeated, and that the future would bring transformation, which was the highest goal of human life.⁷²

According to Men`, it was the Old Testament alone that contained a true understanding of salvation as the realisation of God's will 'to bring the whole universe into harmonious completeness'.⁷³ This is the salvation, Men` stresses, that was accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth.

As it has been shown above, Men` closely relates salvation to the concept of *God-manhood* (Russ. *Богочеловечество*).⁷⁴ This concept is based on the idea that God is constantly drawing His creation into a relationship with Himself, and this process culminates in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. As fully human and fully divine, by Men` He is referred to as the *God-man* (Russ. *Богочеловек*). Salvation, according to Men`, is possible only through God-man, because it is through Him alone that the most intimate relationship between a human being and God can be accomplished:

⁷² Son, pp. 179-180.

⁷³ Son, p. 180. Men`s view of the problems in Zoroaster's idea of salvation will be discussed in 4.4.2.

⁷⁴ See 2.3.1, especially p. 69 ff.

It is impossible to be united (Russ. *слиться*) with God, but it is possible to be united with God-man, for He simultaneously belongs to two worlds—to that of ours and to the one beyond.... The way to the Father is possible through the Son only.⁷⁵

It is *God-manhood*, according to Men`, that constitutes the central point of Christianity: 'The essence of Christianity ... [is] God-manhood, which is the union of limited and temporal human spirit with that of the infinite Divine.'⁷⁶ For Men` the God-man is a historical personality—Jesus of Nazareth: 'the focal point of ... [Christianity] is God-man, the Revelation of ... [God] through a concrete Person—the Messiah, who "for our sake was crucified under Pontius Pilate"'.⁷⁷ The terms *God-man* and *God-manhood* are used by Men` exceptionally in the relationship to Jesus Christ and Christianity. Men` emphasises that Jesus Christ as the God-man is the only Saviour of the world, and in this He differs from all the other religious leaders.

4.4.2 Non-Biblical Religious Leaders as Mediators of Salvation

As the antithesis of *God-man*, Men` employs the idea of *man-god* (Russ. *человекобог*) which embodies man's sinful desire to occupy God's place.⁷⁸ Men` closely relates this idea to people's continual attempts at achieving salvation without God, and views this as radically opposed to the Christian understanding of salvation. In Men``s texts three historical expressions of the idea of man-god can be discerned. The first one is the deification of secular

⁷⁵ *Christianity*, p. 25.

⁷⁶ *Christianity*, p. 30.

⁷⁷ *Threshold*, p. 665.

⁷⁸ Men` uses the term *man-god* differently from Solovyov, who treats it as elevation of human nature which is the goal of the economy of salvation (see СОЛОВЬЕВ [SOLOVYOV], op. cit. (1994), p. 202.

rulers. Men` relates this tendency with *Magism* as an attempt at subduing the natural and the supernatural world with the help of magic signs and actions. According to Men`, this led to sacral monarchy based on the belief that the ruler enjoys supernatural powers and plays a vital role on behalf of his subordinates in the cosmic processes. Men` points out the numerous instances of king-worship (Russ. *царепоклонство*) in history—from Egyptian pharaohs and Sumerian kings, as well as successors of Alexander the Great and Roman emperors, to the reoccurrence of king-worship in the dictatorships of the 20th century. In fact, Men` maintains that the ‘cult of personality’ and deifying Stalin had no equals in history:

The Leader (Russ. *Вождь*) is the only oracle and the bearer of the truth.... ‘The Father of the nations’ (Russ. *Отец народов*) ascends to his lonely Olympus, from which all the other deities, ideals and principles had already been expelled. Augustus himself could not have dreamed of such absolutism...⁷⁹

All the claims of similar ‘man-gods’ are evaluated by Aleksandr Men` as expressions of idolatry and human sinfulness. Another type of human self-deification, according to Men`, occurred during the Renaissance in the form of secular humanism:

Man ... [became] the ‘measure of all things’, [and] was elevated to the rank of a deity. Man’s intellect was declared supreme judge in the profound questions of being. Man’s nature was proclaimed as harmonious and perfect....⁸⁰

In this case deification was extended beyond the rulers to include every human being. Men` maintains that this tendency was developed further in various social and political theories, including Communism. Beside the king-worship and the

⁷⁹ *Dialogue*, p. 161.

⁸⁰ *Sources*, p. 19.

secular humanism, Men` recognises the third form of self-deification in some doctrines that emerged in India during the last millennium B.C. Men` attributes the title of 'man-god' to some Indian religious leaders, such as Buddha and Mahavira, for, according to him, they had rejected God and deified man. On the words of Men`, their doctrines claim that 'the only light of the world is superman, or man-god (Russ. *сверхчеловек, человекобог*)'.⁸¹ In his writings, Men` is very critical of every form of human self-deification and views them as contrary to the true salvation.

Beside 'men-gods', in his history of religions Men` describes many other religious leaders. He usually depicts them and their religious activities with great respect. None of them, however, is portrayed by Men` as able to mediate salvation. In one of his lectures, he was directly asked if there could be other saviours beside Jesus Christ, and his answer was categorically negative:

If the great prophet Muhammad were present here, he would never call himself Saviour. He would say, 'God is our Saviour, and I am His prophet'. If the founder of Buddhism Siddhartha Gautama were here, he would say that he is only a man, who has reached the state of the blessed Nirvana by means of certain exercises. He would say that he teaches about it, but he is not Saviour. None of the great sages of the world ... is Saviour.⁸²

In this answer Men``s denial of the other saviours beside Jesus Christ is mainly based on the fact that none of the 'great sages' have even claimed this status. However, this list of the 'sages' omits the Iranian prophet Zoroaster who in Men``s other writings is described as one who did claim the role of saviour and

⁸¹ Gates, p. 199.

⁸² Answers, p. 317.

messiah. Men` calls Zoroaster 'Iranian saviour',⁸³ and identifies his messianic ideas as 'the only messianism known to the non-biblical world.... Beside the Israel prophets, he alone believed in the approaching victory of God'.⁸⁴ Men` shows the similarities between Zoroaster's teaching and that of the biblical prophets. At the same time Men` describes Zoroaster's messianic ideas as overly politicised:

The biblical prophets acknowledged the necessity of moral activity of man, but they asserted that the true salvation could be expected from God alone. Because of that, they insisted on the futility of political messianism, and denounced all the hopes in 'horses and chariots'.... Zoroaster, however, assumed an opposite point of view.⁸⁵

Men` maintains that 'the idea of the holy war darkened the purity'⁸⁶ of Zoroaster's religion. In general, Men` does not consider Zoroaster a religious leader able to bring salvation.

Another argument of Men` about the absence of all other saviours except Jesus is found in his phrase about Buddha:

As a sage full of compassion for the world, he truly deserves people's love and gratitude, despite his inability to save humankind. But, *who of all people* (Russ. *кто из людей*) is capable of accomplishing this?⁸⁷

This question in the quotation shows that, according to Men`, a mere human being is unable to grant salvation. An analysis in 4.2 has shown that Men` sees all religious leaders, excepting Jesus Christ alone, as mere human beings

⁸³ *Messengers*, p. 645.

⁸⁴ *Messengers*, pp. 492-493.

⁸⁵ *Messengers*, p. 368.

⁸⁶ *Messengers*, p. 376.

⁸⁷ *Gates*, p. 238, emphasis added. Men` asks another similar question about Buddha: 'can we call the true Saviour him who could give people nothing else except example and counsel?' (*Gates*, p. 200).

unable to bring salvation. According to Men`, they are affected by sin and, therefore, are in need of salvation themselves. Some of them perceived this need very consciously and expressed it in their doctrines, but none of the non-biblical religious leaders is described by Men` as having found their own way to salvation independently from the one made available by Jesus Christ.

4.5 Conclusions

The purpose of chapter 4 was to determine if Aleksandr Men` made distinctions between Jesus Christ and the non-biblical religious leaders as indicated in the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*. The research in 4.2 has shown that, according to Men`, Christ's divine nature constitutes essential difference between Him and the other religious leaders. Side by side with this main distinction and closely related to it, Men` also sees the other aspects of Christ's uniqueness, namely, His resurrection and His presence in the world after His earthly life, His relationship to the ultimate truth, His position as the Messiah, the perfection of His human nature, and His central position in the spiritual processes of the world.

The analysis in section 4.3 has shown that for Men`, Jesus Christ is the Logos incarnated, and this personal identity with the divine Word has no analogues in the history of religions. Men` does not explicitly contrast Jesus and the other religious leaders in regard to their relationship to the Logos, as he does in the case of their relationship to God. However, he always speaks of the action of the divine Word only in closest relationship to Jesus of Nazareth. Section 4.4 has examined Men``s understanding of salvific mediation. The analysis has shown

that Men` consistently stresses the uniqueness of Jesus Christ—the God-man—as the only Saviour of the world. Men` is convinced that the other religious leaders cannot save, for they are mere human beings who themselves need salvation. To sum up, the analysis in chapter 4 shows that Aleksandr Men`'s views on the position of Jesus Christ among the non-biblical religious leaders are in line with the guidelines of *Dominus Iesus*.

CHAPTER 5. ALEKSANDR MEN'S POSITION ON THE TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES OF THE NON-BIBLICAL RELIGIONS IN COMPARISON TO THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

5.1 Introduction

One of the key concerns of *Dominus Iesus* is 'to reassert the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ'.¹ The Declaration bases this assertion on the doctrine of Christ's divinity:

the words, deeds, and entire historical event of Jesus, though limited as human realities, *have nevertheless the divine Person of the Incarnate Word, "true God and true man" as their subject*. For this reason, they possess in themselves the *definitiveness and completeness* of the revelation of God's salvific ways, even if the depth of the divine mystery in itself remains transcendent and inexhaustible. The truth about God is not abolished or reduced because it is spoken in human language; rather, it is *unique, full, and complete, because he who speaks and acts is the Incarnate Son of God*.²

As it has been shown in the previous chapter, for Men' Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the unique Person who is fully human and fully divine. On this fundamental level Men's attitude is fully in line with the Catholic position highlighted in *Dominus Iesus*. The next step is to examine Men's view of the distinctiveness of Christ's revelation. Beside asserting the definitiveness and completeness of Christ's revelation, *Dominus Iesus* provides several principles of the Catholic understanding of its relationship to the other religions. The purpose of chapter 5 is to analyse Aleksandr Men's works in reference to these principles.

¹ DI 5.

² DI 5, emphasis added. Quoting: Council of Chalcedon, *Symbolum Chalcedonense: Denzinger-Schönmetzer, Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (1965) 301.

For this analysis, some specific terminology is adopted in the present chapter, namely: the phrase *teachings and practices of non-biblical religions* denotes various phenomena related to the non-biblical religions, which usually include such main components as their doctrinal teachings, moral codes, ritual celebrations and spiritual practices. *Dominus Iesus* views the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions as containing elements of truth, which, however, are mixed with 'gaps, insufficiencies and errors'.³ In the present analysis, the phrase 'seeds of the Word' (Lat. *semina Verbi*) is employed for signifying those elements of truth in the non-biblical religions. As the Latin form *semina Verbi* has been used in current theological debates, it will also be used here. For conciseness, 'gaps, insufficiencies and errors' in the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions will be referred to as *religious errors*.⁴

For the analysis of Men's works, the Declaration's guidelines on the relationship between Christ's revelation and the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions are arranged into three groups, each discussed in a separate section. The first group (section 5.2) explains the fundamental attitude of the Catholic Church towards the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions as containing *semina Verbi* mixed with religious errors. The second group (section 5.3) clarifies the relationship between *semina Verbi* and Christ's revelation. The third group (section 5.4) evaluates some aspects of religious relativism.

³ *DI* 8, quoting PAUL VI. *Address at the opening of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, September 29, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), 858.

⁴ The terms *semina Verbi* and *religious errors* are explained in more detail in 5.2.

5.2 Men's View of *Semina Verbi* and the Religious Errors in the Non-Biblical Religions

5.2.1 The Concept of *Semina Verbi* in Magisterial Teaching and in Men's Works

Dominus Iesus highlights the conviction of the Catholic Church that the non-biblical religions

contain and offer religious elements which come from God, and which are part of what 'the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and religions'.⁵

The Declaration explains that these religious elements 'are the seeds of the divine Word (*semina Verbi*), which the Church recognizes with joy and respect'.⁶ *Dominus Iesus* also defines them as 'elements of goodness and grace',⁷ 'positive elements',⁸ 'elements of good and of truth'.⁹ As will be discussed below, the term *semina Verbi* was introduced into Christian theological vocabulary in the middle of the second century A.D., and has been especially widely used since Vatican Council II. The noun *Word* (Lat. *Verbum*, Genitive case singular *Verbi*) here refers to Jesus Christ as the divine *Word* and the fullness of the revealed truth.¹⁰ This is emphasised by the capitalisation of the noun *Word*. The noun *seed* (Lat. *seminium*, Nominative case plural *semina*) indicates a *rudimentary* form of the elements of truth sown by God in the non-biblical religions, which grow towards the fullness of Christ's revelation.¹¹ The term

⁵ *DI* 21, quoting *RM* 29.

⁶ *DI* footnote 85.

⁷ *DI* 8.

⁸ *DI* 14.

⁹ *DI* footnote 23.

¹⁰ See *DI* 10. See also CCC 101-102; MAGISTER, 'John Paul II and the Other Religions', op. cit. (2004).

¹¹ These aspects of *semina Verbi* are noted, for example, in *DI* 21 and *RM* 28.

semina Verbi is used three times in *Dominus Iesus*. In the main text it appears in a quotation from the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*: 'it is the Spirit who sows the "seeds of the Word" present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity in Christ'.¹² Besides, the term is employed twice in the footnotes (nos. 38 and 85). The Declaration does not give any further explanation of the term, but accepts the meaning used by Vatican II and the post-conciliar documents, where it signifies the elements in the non-Christian religions that are considered 'true and holy'¹³ by the Catholic Church. Vatican II uses *semina Verbi* in the decree *Ad Gentes*, where, in reference to the Catholics living among the people of the other religions, the Council states: 'let them gladly and reverently lay bare the *seeds of the Word* which lie hidden among their fellows'.¹⁴ Although this is the only explicit usage of *semina Verbi* in the documents of the Council, the idea of the elements of truth that are sown by God in the non-Christian religions is clearly discernable in several other places, too.¹⁵ For example, the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* states that the Catholic Church's missionary activity among non-Christians strives to preserve and purify 'whatever good is found sown in the minds and hearts of men or in the rites and customs of peoples'.¹⁶ The same idea is also seen in *Nostra Aetate*.¹⁷

¹² *DI* 12, quoting *RM* 28.

¹³ *NA* 2.

¹⁴ *AG* 11, emphasis added.

¹⁵ See a discussion on this in: RUOKANEN, op. cit. (1992), pp. 58-61.

¹⁶ *LG* 17. A similar expression is used in *AG* 9. See also *LG* 16 and *Gaudium et Spes* 36.

¹⁷ See especially *NA* 2.

The concept of *semina Verbi* has been developed by St Justin Martyr in c. 150 A.D.¹⁸ He used it in reference to some Greek philosophers, Socrates first of all. Similar ideas were expressed by some other Church Fathers, such as St Irenaeus¹⁹ and St Clement of Alexandria.²⁰ Vatican II adopted the term *semina Verbi* from the Fathers, and interpreted it as relevant not only to certain pre-Christian thinkers, but to the non-Christian religions and world views in general:

Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is considered by the Church to be ... given by him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life.²¹

The legitimacy of such an extended interpretation is disputed both within and outside the Catholic Church. Its critics say that the Fathers of the Church

saw 'a seed of the Divine Word' in the ideas of certain speculative and ethical truths expressed by certain philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle and certain Greek poets.... But the *semina Verbi* was never attributed to [any] pagan religion....²²

The post-conciliar magisterial documents, however, consistently viewed the non-Christian religions as containing *semina Verbi*. For example, in 1975 Paul VI discussed the new tasks of the Church's missionary activity in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and stated that the 'non-Christian religions ...

¹⁸ See JUSTIN MARTYR. 'The Second Apology' 8, 10, 13. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers (volume 1). The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, eds., transl. Alexander ROBERTS, James DONALDSON, 191, 193. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995.

¹⁹ See IRENAEUS. 'Against Heresies' IV,6,5-7; IV,7,2; IV,20,6-7. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers (volume 1). The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, eds., transl. Alexander ROBERTS, James DONALDSON, 468-470, 489-490. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995.

²⁰ See CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA. 'The Stromata, or Miscellanies' 1,5; 6,8; 7,2. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers (volume 2). Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (entire)*, eds. Alexander ROBERTS, James DONALDSON, 305-307, 494-496, 524-526. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995.

²¹ LG 16.

²² Si Si No No. 'Note on *Dominus Iesus*'; http://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/SiSiNoNo/2003_March/Note_on_Dominus_Jesus.htm [10 November 2004]; See also: Zenit—The World Seen From Rome (8 January 2004). 'Seeds of the Word'; <http://www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=47083> [9 November 2004].

are all impregnated with innumerable “seeds of the Word”.²³ During the pontificate of John Paul II, this position has been upheld even more strongly. As early as 1979, in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul II stated: ‘The Fathers of the Church rightly saw in the various religions as it were so many reflections of the one truth, “seeds of the Word”’.²⁴ This theme was further developed in the other magisterial documents, which include the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990)²⁵ and the Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (2000).

Aleksandr Men' does not explicitly use the term *semina Verbi* (Russ. *семена Слова*). However, he is well aware of this concept, and his works often express the idea in a very similar way. One of the closest expressions is found in his article ‘On the Problems of the “Axial period”’, where Men' says that ‘the pagan world ... was not left in impenetrable darkness. From the earliest times it has been fertilised by the eternal Logos (Russ. *оплодотворялся вечным Логосом*)’.²⁶ A similar statement appears in the volume *On the Threshold of the New Testament*: ‘the divine Word has always been present in history and [He] was awakening higher aspirations in people’.²⁷ In general, Men' evidently maintains that the non-biblical religions contain elements of God-given truth. He accepts the attitude of Berdyayev that ‘not demons alone revealed themselves to the pagan nations to torment them; the divine light also revealed itself to

²³ EN 53.

²⁴ *Redemptor Hominis* 11.

²⁵ See especially RM 28-29.

²⁶ *Dialogue*, p. 261. Here Men' comments on St Clement of Alexandria and St Justin Martyr. As explained in 4.3, Men' uses the terms *Logos* and *Word* synonymously.

²⁷ *Threshold*, p. 666. Here Men' also comments on St Clement of Alexandria.

them'.²⁸ Men` maintains that this position was supported by a number of Christian thinkers, starting with apostle Paul and some of the Church Fathers, and ending with numerous contemporary writers. He even quotes the declaration *Nostra Aetate* as presenting an 'authentically Christian solution that overcomes both the theosophical levelling (Russ. *обезличивание*) of religions and the unjustified narrowness of pseudo-Biblicism'.²⁹

In regard to the idea of *semina Verbi* in the Church Fathers, Men` mostly makes references to St Justin Martyr and St Clement of Alexandria.³⁰ The writings of these same Fathers are used by Vatican II and the post-conciliar documents as the main patristic sources for the Catholic concept of the elements of truth in the non-biblical religions. Men` interprets the writings of these Fathers on the elements of truth the same way as Vatican II: he extends the term for encompassing the non-biblical religions in general; he does not limit it to the insights of certain Greek thinkers only. In 1991, the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples issued the instruction *Dialogue and Proclamation*. Side by side with the other themes, it explains the Catholic interpretation of the biblical and patristic allusions to *semina Verbi* in the non-biblical religions. This instruction's line of argument is very close to that of Men`'s. For example, this is how *Dialogue and Proclamation* explains apostle Paul's attitude toward the non-biblical religions:

²⁸ *Magism*, pp. 10-11.

²⁹ *Magism*, p. 11. Men` quotes the famous statement from NA 2: 'The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions'.

³⁰ See, e.g., *Threshold*, p. 666; *Magism*, p. 9.

There is, on the one hand, the negative verdict of the Letter to the Romans against those who have failed to recognize God in his creation and have fallen into idolatry and depravity (cf. *Romans* 1:18-32). On the other hand, the Acts testify to Paul's positive and open attitude towards the Gentiles, both in his discourse to the Lycaonians (cf. *Acts* 14:8-18) and in his Areopagus speech at Athens, in which he praised their religious spirit and announced to them the one whom unknowingly they revered as the 'unknown God' (cf. *Acts* 17:22-34).³¹

In comparison, Men` provides the following explanation:

[Paul] maintains that man fell away from God and was consequently plunged into the darkness of idolatry. Nevertheless, he did not stop *searching for the unknown Deity*. The apostle emphasises the *dual* nature of religious process in history. On the one hand, degradation and the eclipse of Truth are observed, but on the other hand, a rise is also obvious.... Apostle Paul chose the altar 'to the unknown god' in Athens as a symbol of this yearning for Heaven.³²

The position of the early Church Fathers is interpreted in similar ways by Men` and by *Dialogue and Proclamation*, too. The instruction states:

The post-Biblical tradition also contains contrasting data. Negative judgements on the religious world of their time can easily be gleaned from the writings of the Fathers. Yet the early tradition shows a remarkable openness.... In particular, writers ... such as Justin, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, either explicitly or in an equivalent way, speak about the 'seeds' sown by the Word of God in the nations. Thus it can be said that for them, prior to and outside the Christian dispensation, God has already, in an incomplete way, manifested himself. This manifestation of the *Logos* is an adumbration of the full revelation in Jesus Christ to which it points.³³

On the same topic Men` says the following:

It was in the difficult period of the Church's tense struggle against ... paganism that Christianity started to analyse the process of religious history. This explains the origin of the view stated by Tatian and Tertullian in the second century about the pagans who worship demons without knowing it. Some of their contemporaries, however, Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, for example, approached the problem of pagan thought differently. They maintained that the divine revelation before Christ

³¹ Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. Instruction *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 1991, 23.

³² *Magism*, pp. 11-12.

³³ Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. *Dialogue and Proclamation* 24.

had not been limited to the Old Testament alone. For pagans, the same role as that of the Old Testament had been played by the lofty teachings that had originated in their own milieu.³⁴

These lengthy quotations can evidently show that Men's interpretations of the biblical and patristic sources on the elements of truth in the non-biblical religions are very similar to those of the Catholic Magisterium.

Dominus Iesus emphasises a close link between the seeds of the Word and Jesus Christ as the Word of God. For example, while speaking about the sacred writings of the non-biblical religions, the Declaration stresses that they 'receive from the mystery of Christ the elements of goodness and grace which they contain'.³⁵ A similar assertion appears in a quotation from the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*:

In the process of discovering and appreciating the manifold gifts—especially the spiritual treasures—that God has bestowed on every people, we cannot separate those gifts from Jesus Christ, who is at the centre of God's plan of salvation.³⁶

Men's position on this point is very much the same. He explicitly asserts that 'all that is beautiful and profound in every religion is the result of Christ's activity'.³⁷

Or, in one of his answers to the questions after a lecture, he states: 'before the coming of Jesus the Nazarene to earth, Christ as Divine Word had been present in history and He had manifested Himself in a number of religious and

³⁴ *Dialogue*, pp. 260-261.

³⁵ *DI* 8, emphasis added.

³⁶ *DI* 10, quoting *RM* 6.

³⁷ МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN', Aleksandr]. 'Христианство и творчество' (лекция) ['Christianity and Art' (lecture)]; <http://oracle.libfl.ru/lectures/crsttvrc.html> [14 January 2005].

philosophical teachings'.³⁸ In addition, Men` often refers to the elements of truth in the non-biblical religions as resulting from the activity the *Logos*.³⁹ As shown in chapter 4, he unambiguously identifies Jesus of Nazareth with the *Logos*, so it is evident that for him *semina Verbi* are inseparably related to Jesus Christ.

5.2.2 The Relationship between *Semina Verbi* and Religious Errors

While acknowledging the presence of *semina Verbi* in the non-biblical religions, *Dominus Iesus* stresses that these elements of truth are intermingled with 'gaps, insufficiencies and errors'.⁴⁰ As stated in 5.1, the latter are being denoted in this thesis by the term *religious errors*. On this point *Dominus Iesus* reiterates the attitude that has constantly been expressed in the conciliar and post-conciliar documents. For example, the decree *Ad Gentes* states that the purpose of Church's missionary activity is to purge 'of *evil associations* those elements of truth and grace which are found among peoples'.⁴¹ Similarly, while considering the non-Christian religions, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that in 'their religious behaviour ... men display limits and errors'.⁴²

Similarly to *Dominus Iesus*, Men` views the non-biblical religions as containing both *semina Verbi* and religious errors. In one of his answers after a lecture, he states: 'I appreciate and respect the ancient teachings.... None of them—be it

³⁸ *Answers*, p. 312. Here Men` refers to Fathers of the Church and explicitly mentions St Clement of Alexandria.

³⁹ See, for example, two quotations from Men`s works on p. 173, above (references no. 26 and 27).

⁴⁰ *DI* 8, quoting *RM* 55. See also *CDF*. Notification on the Book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 8.

⁴¹ AG 9, emphasis added. *DI* makes reference to this text in the footnote 23.

⁴² CCC 844. See also Pius XII. Encyclical Letter *Summi Pontificatus*, 1939, 46.

the Indian wisdom, the ancient Chinese wisdom, or the ancient Iranian wisdom, can be called pure errors.⁴³ Here Men` implicitly asserts that 'the ancient teachings' do contain some errors. This attitude is based on his view of the history of religions as a history of 'the formation of religious consciousness that has to pass through searching and errors, and it is only gradually that higher types of beliefs can appear'.⁴⁴ In his descriptions of the non-biblical religions, Men` constantly indicates various religious errors that are intermingled with elements of truth. For example, he praises the assertion found in the Egyptian Book of the Dead about 'the after-death destiny of man which depends on his actions in life. This was the greatest religious revelation that the Egyptians managed to achieve'.⁴⁵ At the same time, Men` notes significant religious errors in the same book: 'beside its ethics, the Book of the Dead preserves everything it has absorbed from the world of witchcraft and incantations'.⁴⁶ Men` often concludes his descriptions by giving an explicit summary of both *semina Verbi* and religious errors in each religion. For example, this is how he finishes his *Dionysus, Logos and Fate*. He starts by showing the elements of truth in the Greek religions and philosophies:

The sages of Hellas were the first Westerners to proclaim the primacy of spiritual values. Their searches led them to the idea of the supreme divine Principle.... [In the mystery religions] the idea of the immortality of the soul and of the recompense has been revealed, which was to be expressed by Plato in a rational form.⁴⁷

⁴³ *Answers*, p. 268.

⁴⁴ *Threshold*, p. 143.

⁴⁵ *Magism*, p. 108.

⁴⁶ *Magism*, p. 111.

⁴⁷ *Dionysus*, pp. 326-327.

Men` goes on by showing the aspects that he regards as religious errors. Greek thought, according to him,

was unable to free itself fully from the old pagan ideas. Not only did it admit other gods besides the One; it also placed the almighty Fate-Necessity (Russ. *Судьба-Необходимость*) beside Him. Their belief in Ananke was inseparable from their idea of the closed spatio-temporal circle that excluded every possibility of the world's rising to ... higher levels of existence.⁴⁸

In the same way Men` summarises what he considers the main elements of truth and religious errors in the teaching of Buddha. For Men`, Buddha's greatest problem is his rejection of God and his failure to see the value of creation. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the positive value of Buddha's insight into the need for salvation:

The greatness of Buddha and his predecessors consists in the fact that they declared salvation to be the main goal of religion. Gautama ... managed to rise above all illusions and to estimate the whole depth of the world's suffering and its evil.⁴⁹

Similarly, Men` points out both *semina Verbi* and religious errors in the teachings and practices of a number of other non-biblical religions.

5.3 Men`s View of the Relationship between *Semina Verbi* and Christ's Revelation

The analysis in the present section is divided into three areas. Subsection 5.3.1 examines Men`s understanding of the fundamental difference between the biblical revelation and 'natural' revelation. Subsection 5.3.2 considers his view of Christ's revelation as the fullness of revealed truth. Subsection 5.3.3 reviews

⁴⁸ *Dionysus*, p. 327.

⁴⁹ *Gates*, pp. 236-237.

Men's understanding of *semina Verbi* as preparation for receiving Christ's revelation.

5.3.1 The Difference between the Biblical Revelation and 'Natural' Revelation

Before analysing Men's view of the relationship between Christ's revelation and the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions, it is important to determine his understanding of the difference between the ways by which they come to be known. In his *Dictionary of the Bible*, Men identifies this as a difference between the *biblical revelation* (Russ. *библейское откровение*) and 'natural' revelation (Russ. *'естественное' откровение*).⁵⁰ He defines the biblical revelation as 'Godhead's self-disclosure (Russ. *самораскрытие Божества*) and the announcement of His will to man',⁵¹ and stresses its essential difference from 'natural' revelation:

The Deity and His will have to a certain extent been revealed to the gentiles, too.... However, this 'natural' revelation differs in its nature from the revelation in the Biblical religion.⁵²

Several times in his writings, Men explains various distinctions between the biblical revelation and 'natural' revelation. Two among them could be noted as directly pertaining to the *process of receiving* the revelation, and, therefore, particularly important to the present analysis. The first distinction is based on

⁵⁰ Men views Christ's revelation as an integral part of the biblical revelation, or, more precisely, as its culmination (see the discussion in 5.3.2, below). Thus *Christ's revelation* in the present subsection will be represented by a more generic term *biblical revelation*.

⁵¹ *Dictionary*, vol. 2, p. 320. This short definition is close in its wording to the statement made on the same topic by Vatican II: 'God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will' (*Dei Verbum* (Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), 1965, 2, ed. ABBOTT). Both Men and Vatican II understand the biblical revelation first of all as God's revelation of Himself and of His will to mankind.

⁵² *Dictionary*, vol. 2, pp. 320-321.

differing concepts of the Deity's role in the process of revelation, and the second—on different ideas of how it affects a human personality.

As to the first difference, Men` maintains that a 'natural' revelation occurs mainly as a result of man's activity, while in the biblical revelation the initiative fully belongs to God. He emphasises that in highly developed non-biblical religions the Deity is often perceived as immanent to the world, so, 'revelation is a kind of ... a detection (Russ. *обнаружение*)'⁵³ of the Deity. The philosophical and mystical achievements in the process of searching for this Deity, Men` says, have been perceived 'by the great teachers as something conquered, similarly to some of those secrets that man discloses while wrestling with nature'.⁵⁴ The biblical revelation, on the other hand, is an "invasion" of God into the created world ... [in order to] reveal Himself'.⁵⁵ Following Danielou, Men` maintains that the essential difference between the 'natural' and the biblical revelation consists in God's initiative:

There is a fiery border between the natural or intuitive knowledge of God and the biblical theophany or the self-revelation of God.... As it is rightly noticed by J. Danielou, 'Christianity cannot, any more than Judaism, be described as a manifestation of an immanent evolution of the religious genius of mankind, of which these two are merely the relatively higher expressions. They are interventions in history of a transcendent God who introduces man into a domain which is radically closed to him.'⁵⁶

⁵³ *Dictionary*, vol. 2, p. 321.

⁵⁴ *Messengers*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ *Dictionary*, vol. 2, p. 321.

⁵⁶ *Magism*, pp. 13-14, emphasis added. Men` is quoting DANIELOU, J. *Deus et nous*. Paris, 1956, p. 14. In the above text, Danielou's quotation in English is taken from: DANIELOU, Jean. *God and Us*. Transl. Walter ROBERTS. London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1957, p. 10.

God's active position in the biblical revelation is closely related to His definitely benevolent will towards mankind. Men` contrasts this with the non-biblical religions where the Absolute is often perceived as indifferent towards the world:

It would be absolute nonsense to assert that *Nous* of Anaxagoras or the Nirvana of the Buddhists could somehow be 'interested' in humankind.... [But] Yahweh ... has never been indifferent to His creation, especially to man who is carrying His very image. There exist lasting bonds between God and man. God always exercises His unlimited 'interest', His steadfast and intense attention, His constant 'care', usually called the Divine Providence.⁵⁷

Men` sees another distinction between the biblical revelation and 'natural' revelation in the difference of what happens to a human personality during a contact with the supernatural. He stresses that a non-biblical spiritual experience is often described as some kind of 'merging or unification with the Divine.... The sense of individuality is usually lost in these mystical states.'⁵⁸ As to the biblical prophets, Men` stresses that their personalities never disappear during a mystical encounter. On the contrary, they consciously cooperate with God:

This is nothing like the blessed prostration of 'samadhi', or 'turiya' which is [like] dreamless sleep. This is a true 'encounter face to face'. Although God and man are so close, they never disappear 'one in the other', they remain partners in their mystical dialogue.⁵⁹

Following Catholic theologian John McKenzie, Men` maintains that 'it is namely in the sense of "otherness" that the watershed between the biblical Revelation and a natural illumination lies'.⁶⁰ That is, during the spiritual experience which leads to the biblical revelation, the individual receiving it fully retains his

⁵⁷ *Messengers*, p. 62.

⁵⁸ *Messengers*, p. 15. See also p. 498, endnote 5.

⁵⁹ *Messengers*, p. 16.

⁶⁰ *Messengers*, p. 15. Here Men` refers to MCKENZIE, John L. S.J. *The Two-Edged Sword*. New York, 1966, p. 59.

personhood and his free will, while in the case of a 'natural' revelation the personality of the receiving individual tends to dissolve in the Absolute.

5.3.2 Christ's Revelation as the Fullness and Completeness of Revealed Truth

Men's view of the different *natures* of the biblical revelation and 'natural' revelation is closely related to his understanding of their different *contents* acquired as the result of these revelations. As it has been mentioned, *Dominus Iesus* highlights the fullness and completeness of Christ's revelation: 'the full and complete revelation of the salvific mystery of God is given in Jesus Christ'.⁶¹ The analysis of Men's views in reference to this assertion will be done in three steps here. First, it will be shown that Men sees Christ's revelation as surpassing *semina Verbi* found in the other religions. Next, Men's understanding of the completeness of Christ's revelation will be analysed. Finally, his view of Christ's revelation as encompassing all the *semina Verbi* that had been scattered in a number of religions before, will be considered.

Christ's revelation as surpassing *semina Verbi*. In Men's writings there are numerous indications that he regards Christ's revelation as surpassing the elements of truth present in the other religions. For example, in the end of his volume *Dionysus, Logos and Fate*, having shortly recounted the religious developments in the Hellenistic world, Men calls Christ's revelation 'the greatest Revelation to the world'.⁶² The same attitude is seen in Men's texts which compare the knowledge of God present in what could be identified as three

⁶¹ *DI* 6.

⁶² *Dionysus*, p. 329.

'stages' of revelation, namely, in the 'natural' revelation, in the Old Testament revelation, and finally—in Christ's revelation. Men` clearly distinguishes them as comprising qualitatively different ascending levels of the knowledge of God. For example, in the end of the volume *The Messengers of the Kingdom of God* he compares the teaching of the biblical prophets with some of the highest achievements of the non-biblical religious leaders:

Great sages of the ancient world accomplished a heroic deed by rejecting the old religious understanding where the relationship between man and ... [the Deity] was like a bargain. But to the biblical teachers something infinitely greater has been revealed, namely, the deepest relationship between man and ... [God]. It means a unity that does not simply bring peace or light; it also stimulates active goodness. To them the mystery of the Creator who suffers for the world and the miracle of the Divine Love has been revealed.⁶³

Similarly to this text, on numerous other occasions Men` also indicates that the Old Testament revelation surpasses the natural knowledge of God found in the non-biblical religions.⁶⁴ As to the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments, Men` often stresses that the former has been surpassed by Christ's revelation. For example, Men` says that through the teaching of the Old Testament prophets, 'the pre-Christian world had been brought to the uttermost boundary beyond which the revelation of God-manhood (Russ. *Богочеловечество*) starts.'⁶⁵ Or, he describes the Old Testament writings that were produced during the Babylonian exile as 'the climax of the Old Testament religion, the peak which has only been surpassed by the snow-white summit of the New Testament Revelation alone'.⁶⁶ In addition to these direct comparisons,

⁶³ *Messengers*, pp. 449-450.

⁶⁴ See, for example: *Son*, pp. 18-19; *Creed*, pp. 86, 97-98; *Messengers*, pp. 9-24.

⁶⁵ *Messengers*, p. 16. As shown in 4.4.1, Men` relates *God-manhood* exclusively to Jesus Christ.

⁶⁶ *Messengers*, p. 312.

the same position is easily discernible in Men's actual descriptions of the non-biblical religions. As it has been shown above, Men considers the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions as containing both elements of truth and various religious errors. Differently from them, Men sees Christ's revelation as free from all religious errors because of Christ's unique relationship to the ultimate truth.⁶⁷ Therefore, Men consistently views Christ's revelation as surpassing both 'natural' revelation and the Old Testament revelation.

The completeness of Christ's revelation. *Dominus Iesus* stresses that Christ's revelation is complete and does not need to be complemented by any elements of truth present in the non-biblical religions: 'the theory of the ... revelation of Jesus Christ, which would be complementary to that found in other religions, is contrary to the [Catholic] Church's faith'.⁶⁸ Men does not present any detailed analysis of this issue. However, several texts indicate that his position is at this point in line with that of *Dominus Iesus*. In *The Messengers of the Kingdom of God* Men explicitly identifies Christ's revelation as 'definitive completeness (Russ. окончательная полнота)⁶⁹ of the biblical revelation. Also, in the introduction to *Magism and Monotheism* Men states that 'the self-revelation of God in the Old Testament was completed in the God-man of the New

⁶⁷ See a discussion on this in 4.2.2, especially pp. 151 ff.

⁶⁸ *DI* 6. See also *CDF*. Notification on the Book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 3.

⁶⁹ *Messengers*, p. 193. Here Men's wording is especially close to that of *DI*, which says that Christ's revelation is 'definitive and complete (*DI* 5). See also *Messengers*, p. 450.

Testament'.⁷⁰ Men's view of the completeness of Christ's revelation is implicitly affirmed in the following text from *The Sources of Religion*:

[The Gospel] was later abandoned by some of the individuals who had received it. Essentially, however, the world had nowhere else to go. It could only go back again and again to the same errors (Russ. *блуждание*) that had allured the human spirit in the pre-Christian times. Refusing Christ practically meant nothing else than returning either to Buddha or Confucius, to Zoroaster or to Plato, to Democritus or to Epicurus.⁷¹

Here Men's understanding of Christ's revelation being quite complete is indicated by his assertion that after Christ 'the world had nowhere else to go'. This makes it obvious that for Men it is in principle impossible that something could complement or surpass Christ's revelation.

Christ's revelation as encompassing *semina Verbi*. The view of Christ's revelation as the fullness and completeness of revealed truth naturally leads to the idea that it encompasses all the elements of truth present in the non-biblical religions. This idea is often explicitly affirmed by Men. For example, at the end of the volume *On the Threshold of the New Testament* he writes:

Similarly to the white colour, which encompasses the whole of the spectrum, the Gospel embraces the faith of the prophets, the Buddhist longing for salvation, the dynamism of Zoroaster and the humaneness of Confucius. It sanctifies the best that has been found in the ethics of the classical philosophers and in the mysticism of the Indian sages.⁷²

Similarly, in *Son of Man* he states: 'Christianity has brought the wisdom of Athens and the hopes of the East together with the Roman dream about the universal "harmony"'.⁷³ At the same time, Men warns his readers against the

⁷⁰ *Magism*, p. 14, emphasis added.

⁷¹ *Sources*, p. 8.

⁷² *Threshold*, p. 665. See also: МЕНЬ [MEN'], op. cit. (2002), p. 46.

⁷³ *Son*, p. 316.

wrong understanding of Christ's revelation as some kind of syncretic fusion of certain elements selected from different religions.⁷⁴ For Men', Christ's revelation does not simply include, but—as it has already been shown—it surpasses *semina Verbi* found in the non-biblical religions. These two aspects of Men''s position can be seen especially well from the initial phrases of his lecture 'Christianity'. At first Men' highlights the inclusiveness of Christ's revelation:

Christianity came as a challenge to ... [the existing] philosophical and religious systems, but at the same time it fulfilled most of their expectations. In fact, the great thing in Christian spirituality is affirmation, inclusion and completion, not negation.⁷⁵

He continues with listing some of the similarities between Christ's revelation and several non-biblical religions, and proceeds with stating:

However, it would be a mistake to hold that Christianity ... has just picked up various elements of the earlier beliefs. In it, a colossal power of novelty has been revealed.⁷⁶

Thus, Men' views Christ's revelation as the fullness and completeness of revealed truth, and his attitude on this issue is in line with that of *Dominus Iesus*.

5.3.3 *Semina Verbi* as Preparation for the Gospel

Dominus Iesus states that *semina Verbi* constitute 'a preparation for the reception of the Gospel'.⁷⁷ This magisterial teaching has been constantly reiterated since Vatican II.⁷⁸ One of the key conciliar texts on this theme appears

⁷⁴ In more detail Men''s view of religious syncretism will be analysed in 5.4, below.

⁷⁵ *Christianity*, p. 17.

⁷⁶ *Christianity*, p. 17.

⁷⁷ *DI* footnote 23. See also *DI* 12. The phrase 'Preparation for the Gospel' (Lat. *Praeparatio Evangelica*) was first used by Eusebius of Caesarea in the 4th cent. A.D. (see EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, 'Praeparatio Evangelica (Preparation for the Gospel)'. Transl. E. H. GIFFORD; http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_pe_00_intro.htm [5 November 2005]).

⁷⁸ See, for example, *EN* 53, *RM* 29, *CCC* 843.

in the Constitution *Lumen gentium*, which says in regard to non-Christians: 'Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is considered by the Church to be a *preparation for the Gospel*'.⁷⁹ In his history of religions Men` frequently and explicitly speaks of the non-biblical religions in this respect. He describes them as 'preparation of humanity for the Gospel',⁸⁰ or as 'a threshold to the New Testament',⁸¹ 'a prologue to the Gospel'.⁸² In his words, they 'were preparing minds for the reception of the Gospel',⁸³ and they 'have helped man to come to the border of the Revelation'.⁸⁴ Or, in reference to the teaching of Zoroaster Men` says:

If the Church Fathers have seen the classical [philosophical] thought as a prelude to the New Testament, what can prevent us from saying the same of the teaching of Spitama Zoroaster?⁸⁵

An important aspect of *semina Verbi* as a preparation for the Gospel has been emphasised by Cardinal Ratzinger at the press conference presenting *Dominus Iesus*. He commented on the statement made by John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*: 'whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the Gospel'.⁸⁶ In this text, Ratzinger stresses the following: "preparation for the Gospel" must be considered not as what is to be found in religions but only "what the Spirit brings

⁷⁹ LG 16, emphasis added.

⁸⁰ *Answers*, p. 252.

⁸¹ *Dionysus*, p. 230.

⁸² *Gates*, p. 83.

⁸³ *Dionysus*, pp. 7-8.

⁸⁴ *Dionysus*, p. 327.

⁸⁵ *Messengers*, p. 368.

⁸⁶ RM 29. Here *semina Verbi* are referred to as what 'the Spirit brings about'.

about" therein'.⁸⁷ A similar remark was made by Ratzinger in one of his interviews, too:

God gives light to everyone.... In this sense we say that other religions have rites and prayers which can play a role of preparing for the Gospel.... But we also say that *this does not apply to all rites*. For there are some ... which turn man away from the light.⁸⁸

Here Ratzinger alludes to the statement in *Dominus Iesus* that some 'rituals, insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors ... constitute an obstacle to salvation'.⁸⁹ Thus his assertion that *semina Verbi* alone can play the role of a preparation for the Gospel should be seen as originating from the magisterial teaching that the non-biblical religions contain both *semina Verbi* and religious errors.

Men's position on this issue is well seen from his descriptions of the non-biblical religions. As it has been shown, he sees both *semina Verbi* and religious errors in them. The former are often identified as contributing to the preparation for the Gospel, while the latter—as constituting a hindrance to it. For example, after praising some aspects in the teaching of the Upanishads, Men asks:

Could not ... [this religion] serve as the best possible prologue to the Gospel? Unfortunately, there existed something in it, which prevented this Indian knowledge of God from becoming the Old Testament for mankind.⁹⁰

Men proceeds with indicating what he considers erroneous ideas that had prevented the Upanishads from becoming 'the best possible prologue to the

⁸⁷ VISWR (5 September 2000).

⁸⁸ *Objections*, 1671, no. 49 (6 December 2000), 8, emphasis added.

⁸⁹ *DI* 21.

⁹⁰ *Gates*, pp. 83-84. See also *Gates*, pp. 235-236, *Magism*, p. 155.

Gospel'. These were the ideas related to the origin and the purpose of the Universe. Men` evaluates Plato's philosophy in a similar way, too:

For numerous educated Greeks and Romans, Platonism had acted as a prologue to the New Testament.... Nevertheless, the situation with Plato is much more complicated than it may seem at first sight.... [His teaching has played] an ambivalent role in the history of pre-Christian thought.... On the one hand, Platonism is antiquity's threshold to the New Testament. On the other,... it is in direct opposition to the biblical teaching in some aspects.⁹¹

It is these aspects 'in direct opposition to the biblical teaching' that, according to Men`, impeded Platonism's function as 'antiquity's threshold to the New Testament'. Therefore, according to Men`, it is precisely *semina Verbi* that constitute a preparation to the Gospel. In this respect his understanding is in line with the point of view highlighted by Ratzinger.

5.4 Men``s Position on Certain Aspects of Religious Relativism and Syncretism

As was discussed in chapter 3, *Dominus Iesus* categorically opposes 'the belief that "one religion is as good as another"',⁹² and identifies this view as a direct expression of religious relativism. Important aspects of Men``s idea of this belief are seen from his analysis of another related phenomenon, namely religious syncretism, which means the fusing of various elements from several religions.⁹³ As it was noted in 5.3.2, Men` rejects the view that Christianity is a syncretic religion. He also declines the syncretistic approach to the problem of plurality of

⁹¹ *Dionysus*, pp. 229-230.

⁹² *DI* 22, quoting *RM* 36.

⁹³ In a glossary at the end of *Threshold* Men` defines *syncretism* as 'a mechanical fusion of various cults' (*Threshold*, p. 806; see also a similar definition in *Dionysus*, p. 387). The phrase *religious relativism* in this section is used to signify 'the belief that "one religion is as good as another"' (*DI* 22).

religions in general. While starting his *Magism and Monotheism*, Men` discusses three views on the differences among religions:⁹⁴ (1) the view that the differences among religions are of secondary importance only, all religions being various expressions of the same universal pan-religion; (2) the view that the only true knowledge of God is given in the biblical revelation, while everything else should be treated as 'mere human fantasies or superstitions';⁹⁵ (3) the view that the fullness of the knowledge of God is given in the biblical revelation, while the non-biblical religions contain separate elements of truth. As it has already been shown, Men` advocates the third view as an authentically Christian approach to the problem of religious plurality. As for the religious relativism of the first view and the biblical exclusivism of the second view, Men` considers both of them errors. According to Men`, seeing various religions as particular expressions of some pan-religion will naturally lead to syncretistic endeavour of discovering that pan-religion. This endeavour, in Men`'s words,

will inevitably end up each religion losing its specific individuality, as well as in the elimination of ... all the treasures found in concrete religious teachings. Besides, this deletion of their boundaries ... leads to concealing the significant contradictions among religions.⁹⁶

Here Men` indicates two related problems caused by religious syncretism. First, he maintains that religious syncretism produces a very impoverished and superficial kind of religion.⁹⁷ While answering his listeners' questions after a lecture, Men` remarks that 'in history such [syncretic] religions have always

⁹⁴ See *Magism*, pp. 8-9. This issue is also analysed in *Dialogue*, pp. 280-281.

⁹⁵ *Magism*, p. 9.

⁹⁶ *Magism*, p. 8. See also *Answers*, pp. 273-274.

⁹⁷ In *Dialogue* he describes it as 'an amorphous' religion (see *Dialogue*, p. 259).

proved stillborn (Russ. *мертворожденный*).⁹⁸ Although at this point Men` might be criticised for overgeneralisation,⁹⁹ it is nevertheless clear that religious syncretism is seen by him as a form of spiritual degradation. Second, Men` claims that different religions contain too many mutually exclusive elements, which makes the creation of a coherent pan-religion virtually impossible. That is seen, for example, from his analysis of the problems encountered by Stoicism in its syncretistic views on various beliefs and practices:

There are too many mutually exclusive and irreconcilable elements in [different] religions.... For example, the Greeks were aware that the followers of Mazdaism were considering the Greek gods to be evil spirits, so it had to be decided who was right. They also knew that the Carthaginians were approving of sacrificing children and thought this a virtue. Was it possible to offer this religion to those for whom such a custom meant a vile crime?

In similar cases philosophers used to put the whole blame on the superstitious ... [fear of demons] that had obscured man's mind. But in doing this, they also admitted that the people could have had an erroneous attitude towards the deity. This makes it very difficult to claim that *all religions can be equally true*.¹⁰⁰

According to Men`, the weakness of the syncretistic approach consists in its failure to see that different religions cannot be regarded as 'equally true'. Thus, it is obvious that Men` rejects both religious relativism and religious syncretism.

Although the idea of all religions being equally true is explicitly rejected by Men`, one specific case is found where he seems to be advocating it, at least partially.

⁹⁸ *Answers*, p. 256.

⁹⁹ Here Men` seems to be ignoring the vitality of such syncretic religions as, for example, Hinduism, Sikhism, or the modern theosophical movements. His inconsistency is especially clear in the case of Hinduism, for in another place Men` explicitly points out both the syncretic nature and the vitality of this religion: 'Hinduism ... comprises a many-coloured amalgam of cults, which, however, does not impede its stability and vitality' (*Threshold*, p. 60; see also *Gates*, p. 113).

¹⁰⁰ *Threshold*, pp. 143-144, emphasis added.

On several occasions, while talking about the teachings of some religious leaders, including Jesus Christ, Men` asserts that all of them are telling the truth. For example, he states in his last interview: 'I am sure that each of the [religious] teachers who have founded world religions is telling the truth'.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, in the same interview Men` asserts that religious relativism is unacceptable:

Should we not accept the idea ... that God reveals Himself or can be known through any form of religion? In that case ... the absolute value of Christianity would disappear.... I am convinced that the absolute value of Christianity is shown by ... Jesus Christ alone.¹⁰²

To solve this seeming inconsistency, it has to be asked in which sense and to what degree Men` supposes various religious leaders as 'telling the truth'. In the interview Men` presents several of their assertions as trustworthy:

Buddha says that he managed to achieve the state of absolute detachment due to long and hard exercises. Can we believe him? I suppose we can. For he truly was a great man, and he did achieve this.

The Greek philosophers tell us how difficult it is for the intellect to come to the idea of God and of the spiritual world. And this is certainly true.

Muhammad says ... that God has revealed Himself to him, and he [was feeling] like a fly before Him. Can we believe this? Yes, we can!... *Each of them should be believed.* But if we believe that God revealed Himself to Muhammad, why should we exclude the Founder of Christianity and reject His testimony?... I believe that God somehow acts through each of the great teachers, so, there is no ground for saying: 'We will lay Jesus Christ aside'. No. *All of them are right.* Therefore, He who says 'I and the Father are one' must also be right.¹⁰³

The phrase 'all of them are right' seems to refer here to the central messages of the respective religious leaders, i.e., to their basic spiritual experiences and insights. According to Men`, the most important aspect in the message of Jesus

¹⁰¹ Interview, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰² Interview, p. 4.

¹⁰³ Interview, pp. 5-6, emphasis added.

is the uniqueness of His relationship with God—'I and the Father are one'.¹⁰⁴ Accepted as correct (on the basis that 'all of them are right'), this statement excludes Jesus from the other religious leaders, for, as Men` stresses in the same interview, 'none of the other great teachers ... had ever said anything of the sort.'¹⁰⁵ It is seen, therefore, that Men` uses the approach 'all of them are right' paradoxically here—as a device for opposing religious relativism.

Nevertheless, Men`s practical application of such an approach seems to be open for criticism, for it is not quite clear at which point the teachings of the other religious leaders cease to be equally true. Also, the question arises why Buddha, Plato or Muhammad 'should be believed' when they disclose their most important insights, but ought to be rejected in their further teachings? It is only due to an in-depth analysis of Men`s works that the essence of this approach can be discovered: for Men` the truthfulness of the non-biblical religious leaders' teachings—their main insights as well as their further ideas—is to be measured by Christ's revelation alone. That is, they are to be believed only because and to the degree that their teachings contain *semina Verbi*. However, that is not immediately seen in the texts where Men` simply states that all of the main religious leaders 'are right', which may give an impression that he is promoting religious relativism. It is probable that Men` was rather reserved about using this approach himself, for it is not found in any of his writings. He employed it only in his spoken messages, when addressing the people with very confused religious

¹⁰⁴ In more detail Men`s view of this relationship was analysed in 4.2.1.

¹⁰⁵ *Interview*, p. 5. Men`s understanding of Christ's unique position among the other religious leaders was analysed in detail in chapter 4.

beliefs.¹⁰⁶ In those cases he probably intended to show within very restricted time limits that Christ's revelation deserved attention alongside with the popular teachings present in the non-biblical religions. On the other hand, in his writings Men' chose to give a fuller picture of the relationship between Christ's revelation and the teachings of the non-biblical religious leaders. Thus, his assertion that 'all of them are right' should not be considered any compromise with religious relativism.

5.5 Conclusions

The purpose of chapter 5 was to examine Aleksandr Men''s understanding of the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions in comparison to Christ's revelation. The research has comprised three related areas described in separate sections. The analysis in section 5.2 has demonstrated a remarkable correlation between the position of Men' and that of the Catholic Church on *semina Verbi* and religious errors in the non-biblical religions. First, both agree that the non-biblical religions contain *semina Verbi* that are closely related with Jesus Christ. Second, Men''s interpretation of the writings of the early Church Fathers on *semina Verbi* is essentially the same as that of Vatican II and the post-conciliar Magisterium. Third, both Men' and *Dominus Iesus* see *semina Verbi* as intermingled with religious errors.

¹⁰⁶ The only three occurrences of this argument are detected in: *Interview*, pp. 4-6; *Answers*, pp. 309-311; МЕНЬ, Александр [MEN', Aleksandr]. 'Христианство и культура' (лекция) ['Christianity and Culture' (lecture)]; http://oracle.libfl.ru/lectures/cul_fian.html [16 December 2004].

Section 5.3 has examined Men's view of the relationship between *semina Verbi* and Christ's revelation. The analysis has determined that, first of all, Men sees an essential difference between the 'natural' revelation as a source for the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions on the one hand, and the biblical revelation that culminates in Christ's revelation—on the other. Next, he views Christ's revelation as encompassing and surpassing all *semina Verbi* scattered in the non-biblical religions. For Men, Christ's revelation means the fullness and completeness of revealed truth, and thus, it cannot be complementary to the elements of truth found in the other religions. Finally, Men views *semina Verbi* as constituting a preparation for the Gospel. The analysis in section 5.4 has demonstrated that, according to Men, both religious relativism and religious syncretism are irreconcilable with the Christian understanding of the non-biblical religions. Therefore, the research made in chapter 5 shows that Men's attitude toward the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions as compared to Christ's revelation is in line with the guidelines of *Dominus Iesus* on this issue.

CHAPTER 6. ALEKSANDR MEN'S VIEW OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FAITH IN CHRISTIANITY AND BELIEF IN THE NON-BIBLICAL RELIGIONS

6.1 Introduction

Paragraph 7 of *Dominus Iesus* highlights the Catholic doctrine about an essential difference between *theological faith* (Lat. *fides theologalis*) as grace-enabled assent to God's revelation, and *belief* (Lat. *credulitas*) as an attitude towards spiritual sphere in the non-biblical religions:

If *faith* is the acceptance in grace of revealed truth ... then *belief*, in the other religions, is that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute.¹

The Declaration notes that theological faith 'involves a dual adherence: to God who reveals and to the truth which he reveals'.² In contrast, belief in the other religions is regarded as an attitude 'still in search of *the absolute truth* and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself'.³ Thus, this difference is closely related to the distinction between Christ's revelation as 'the absolute truth', and the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions as containing elements of truth mixed with religious errors. As it was shown in the previous chapter, Aleksandr Men's position on this fundamental distinction is in full conformity with that of *Dominus Iesus*. However, further analysis is necessary to find whether Men's views on the distinctiveness of the theological faith is in line with the guidelines of the Declaration. That is the purpose of the present chapter 6.

¹ DI 7, emphasis added.

² DI 7.

³ DI 7, emphasis added.

Dominus Iesus does not present detailed descriptions of the theological faith or of belief in the other religions, but it makes frequent references to the other documents, mostly to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the chapter 'Man's Response to God'.⁴ Side by side with *Dominus Iesus*, this chapter of the *Catechism* will be used in the present research as the main coherent presentation of the Catholic teaching on these issues.

For analytical purpose, several terms are adopted in this chapter. The term *faith* will here signify the theological faith, as described by *Dominus Iesus* and the other related magisterial documents. *Faith* is man's proper response to Christ's revelation. It is contrasted to the term *belief*, which signifies man's attitude toward the spiritual sphere as it is understood in the non-biblical religions. Besides *faith* and *belief*, Men` also speaks about man's universal orientation towards the supernatural sphere and about his striving for a relationship with spiritual realities, without specifically distinguishing between Christianity and the other religions. This general orientation will be called *religious attitude* in the following analysis. *Religious attitude* is human directedness to the spiritual sphere in the broadest sense of the word and thus, it is present in both *faith* and *belief*. In the present chapter, two different approaches of investigation will be adopted. At first I will analyse Men`s texts on *faith* and *belief* with the purpose of defining the practical distinctions that he sees between them (section 6.2). I will proceed by studying Men`s vocabulary related to *faith* and *belief* (section 6.3).

⁴ See CCC 142-184.

The purpose of this latter analysis is to determine if Men` distinguishes between these two concepts linguistically by associating them with different terminology.

6.2 Analysis of Men`'s Treatment of *Faith* and *Belief*

6.2.1 Assent to God as a Distinctive Feature of *Faith*

Both *Dominus Iesus* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* highlight man's assent to God's self-revelation as a key feature of *faith*. That is seen, for example, in the following definition of *faith*:

Faith is a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an *assent* of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words.⁵

According to *Dominus Iesus*, it is this assent to God that fundamentally distinguishes *faith* from *belief*. Amato stressed at the press conference presenting *Dominus Iesus* that *faith* is a 'theological virtue that implies free and personal assent to all the truths revealed by God', while *belief* is 'without assent to God who reveals'.⁶ The *Catechism* employs the scriptural phrase 'the obedience of faith'⁷ for explaining this assent to God:

By *faith*, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, 'the obedience of faith'.⁸

The same is stressed in *Dominus Iesus*:

⁵ CCC 176, emphasis added.

⁶ Vatican Information Services (5 September 2000). 'Presentation of Declaration "Dominus Iesus"; http://faithleap.home.att.net/Dominus_Iesus_news.htm#Article%20Dominus%20Iesus [15 February 2005].

⁷ See *Romans* 1:5; 16:26.

⁸ CCC 143.

The proper response to God's revelation is "*the obedience of faith ... by which man freely entrusts his entire self to God, offering 'the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals' and freely assenting to the revelation given by him*".⁹

According to the *Catechism*, the basis for the obedience of faith is God's trustworthiness: 'To obey ... in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its *truth is guaranteed by God*, who is Truth itself.'¹⁰ To illustrate the obedience of faith, the *Catechism* makes special reference to Abraham's faith, and calls him 'the model of such obedience'.¹¹ Besides Abraham, the *Catechism* mentions some other Old Testament figures and also Virgin Mary as examples of this obedience of faith. Non-biblical religious leaders, however, are not mentioned in relation to *faith*.

As it has been noted above, the Catholic doctrine distinguishes two aspects of *faith*:

Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*.¹²

"To believe" has thus a twofold reference: to the person, and to the truth: to the truth, by trust in the person who bears witness to it.¹³

Although in his works Men` often speaks about *faith*, he does not discuss its second aspect, namely, man's 'assent to the whole truth that God has revealed'. However, as it has been shown in chapter 5, Men` views Christ's revelation as the fullness of revealed truth, which must be accepted as such on the basis of

⁹ *DI 7*, quoting *Dei Verbum* 5.

¹⁰ CCC 144, emphasis added. The same idea is highlighted in *DI 7*.

¹¹ CCC 144.

¹² *DI 7*, quoting CCC 150.

¹³ CCC 177.

Christ's divinity. Other religions, as he sees them, are still in search of this truth. These basic premises show that Men's view of the second aspect of *faith* is generally in line with the position of *Dominus Iesus*.¹⁴

In quite a few places Men considers *faith* in regard to the first aspect, that is, to 'personal adherence of man to God'.¹⁵ For example, in the lecture 'Christianity', he explains *faith* by referring to Abraham's obedience to God:

What does *faith in Jesus Christ* mean?... We have to remember the faith proclaimed in the Old Testament.... When Abraham says 'yes' to God, or, rather, says nothing, but just silently obeys His call, that is when the faith is born.... So, the notion of 'faith' is very close to the notion of 'faithfulness'. God is faithful to His promise and man is faithful to God....¹⁶

The same idea is seen in Men's catechesis on the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed:

Apostle Paul speaks about Abraham as ... the father of all who believe, the prototype of man who trusts God.... He believed in God and in God's faithfulness to His own word.¹⁷

Men repeatedly stresses that *faith* first of all denotes practical trust and obedience to God:

In the Old Testament ... this notion about faith as *trust* emerges. Faith did not mean [just] some kind of theoretical ... conviction (Russ. *убеждение*), faith meant action ... when man says to God: 'Yes, I accept and I am heeding'.¹⁸

¹⁴ However, since Men is a Russian Orthodox, his views can hardly be in agreement with the specifically Catholic understanding of some concrete details of man's 'assent to the whole truth that God has revealed' (*DI* 7). This is mainly because the Catholic doctrine stresses the key role of the Magisterium in these matters (see, e.g., a discussion of the three levels of assent on p. 122 ff., above). Since these questions are primarily related to ecclesiological doctrines of *DI*, they will not be analysed here any further.

¹⁵ *DI* 7, quoting CCC 150.

¹⁶ *Christianity*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁷ *Creed*, p. 44.

¹⁸ *Christianity*, p. 20.

Faith (Russ. *вера*) ... means trusting (Russ. *доверие*) God and being faithful to Him.¹⁹

Righteousness consists in faith and unreserved *trust* (Russ. *доверие*) in the Creator. It does not consist in [observing] the Law. Namely this kind of faith made Abraham the father of the people of God....²⁰

In these passages three important features of Men's notion of *faith* as 'a personal adherence of man to God'²¹ can be distinguished: (1) *faith* first of all means unconditional trust in God, (2) this trust expresses itself in practical obedience to God's will, (3) this trust is embodied in Abraham's obedient response to God's call. These features show that Men's notion of *faith* does include the assent to God as it is defined in *Dominus Iesus*.

6.2.2 The Search for God and Truth as a Distinctive Feature of Belief

Dominus Iesus highlights the ongoing search for truth and lack of assent to God's self-revelation as two related features of *belief*: 'belief ... is religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself'.²² As it was shown in the previous subsection, Men views *faith* in Christianity as including an unconditional assent to God's self-revelation. At the same time, there is no indication in Men's works that he could have found analogues for this assent in the non-biblical religions. Besides, in several places he speaks—even though indirectly—about the lack of assent to God's self-revelation in those religions. For example, while describing the Old Testament covenant at Mount Sinai, he states:

¹⁹ *Son*, p. 93.

²⁰ *Son*, p. 394.

²¹ *DI* 7, quoting CCC 150.

²² *DI* 7.

From now on, the history of religions will cease being just a story of anguish, yearning and searching; it will become the history ... of a *dialogue* between the Creator and man.²³

Here Men` identifies *belief* with 'anguish, yearning, and searching', while the Old Testament revelation introduces a new element into the history of religions, that of dialogue, i.e., God's self-revelation and man's response to it. Men` views the Old Testament as superseded and fulfilled by the New Testament, so the same quality of dialogue is characteristic of Christ's revelation to no lesser extent than it is of the Old Testament revelation. Similarly, while answering the questions after a lecture, Men` contrasts God's self-revelation in Christianity with *belief* as a search for the absolute truth: 'All religions represent the attempts of man to find the truth about God. But Christianity is not a religion—it is God's response to our question.'²⁴

As for the first of these features—belief as man's 'search of the absolute truth'²⁵—it was shown in chapter 2 that Men` views the whole history of religions as the history of this search. According to Men`, *belief* as man's attitude toward the spiritual sphere in the non-biblical religions includes two opposite tendencies: on the one hand, man searches for God and truth, but on the other—he tries to manipulate God because of human inclination toward *Magism*. Men` sees the struggle between these two tendencies as present in every religion. For example, the prehistoric shamanistic religions, according to Men`, mainly express man's attempt to control the supernatural forces by means of

²³ *Magism*, p. 327.

²⁴ *Answers*, p. 252.

²⁵ *DI* 7.

religious rituals as well as related ecstatic or mystical experiences. However, even in these religions he discerns some positive spiritual aspirations:

In its essence, this [shamanistic ritualism] was expressing man's attempt to attain spiritual freedom and power by mechanical means. Nevertheless, a moving element is found in these convulsive attempts—namely,... a tireless thirst for higher things, which prevents man from sinking into a gloomy half-animal state.²⁶

In some religions, Men` sees authentic search for God and truth gaining a very strong expression. This aspect of *belief* is highlighted, for example, in his descriptions of the emergence of Brahmanism in India at the beginning of the last millennium B.C.:

Despite all likeness between India and the other countries, original features emerge in India, which will make it the land of *seekers for God*. In the woods around the cities and villages [of India], crowds of strange inhabitants can be seen: nearly naked, bodies covered with long mops of tangled hair.... Their former life does not satisfy these people any more: they are awake to strive for something higher, something they cannot as yet fully comprehend. They are *seekers of truth*, unable to find answers in the customs or in the religion of their own society.²⁷

According to Men`, the search for God and truth is an essential element of *belief*. He maintains that this search has been met and answered by God's revelation in Christ. So, on these key points Men``s understanding of *belief* is in line with the guidelines of *Dominus Iesus*.

6.2.3 Men``s Understanding of Religious Attitude

Men` often speaks about the human striving for a relationship with the supernatural sphere, without specifically distinguishing between Christianity and the other religions. He believes that this striving is part of human nature,

²⁶ *Magism*, p. 48.

²⁷ *Gates*, pp. 63-64, emphasis added.

regardless of religious affiliations. This view is generally in line with the Catholic position:

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself.... In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behaviour: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may well call man a *religious being*....²⁸

As was defined in 6.1, this universal human orientation toward the supernatural sphere is signified by the term *religious attitude* in this chapter. *Religious attitude* expresses the essential directedness of the human nature, so it is embodied in every religion, and is, therefore, part of both *faith* and *belief*. Aleksandr Men' presents a systematic analysis of *religious attitude* in *The Sources of Religion*, the first volume in his history of religions. In its preface he is explaining that this volume studies the phenomenon of religion in general—namely, 'the essence and the origin of religion, as well as the very beginning ... of the history of religions'.²⁹ Men''s view of *religious attitude* reveals important aspects of his understanding of *faith* and *belief*, so it is significant for the present research. The main elements of Men''s analysis of *religious attitude* include its relationship to human reason, free will, personal religious experience, and language. As it will be seen, Men''s descriptions of *religious attitude* contain many aspects of *faith*. To illustrate this, I will be comparing his explanations with those of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

²⁸ CCC 27-28.

²⁹ *Sources*, p. 11.

Men` gives much attention to the relationship between *religious attitude* and the natural human reason. Human reason, in Men`s opinion, may serve as 'a threshold for coming to know God (Russ. *Богопознание*)'.³⁰ Reason does not prove God, but it urges and prompts man in God`s direction: 'it is a matter not of 'proofs' in the narrow sense of the word, but of indications (Russ. *свидетельство*)'.³¹ Men`s idea here is very close to that formulated by the *Catechism* in regard to *faith*:

the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to know him. These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of "converging and convincing arguments," which allow us to attain certainty about the truth.³²

The proofs of God`s existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to reason.³³

Men` stresses that the problems encountered by natural reason do not necessarily diminish the strength of convictions present in *religious attitude*: 'Intellect may be perplexed by such problems as [the link between] God and evil, freedom and predestination, but living faith (Russ. *живая вера*) abides where these contradictions have already disappeared.'³⁴ The *Catechism* describes *faith* the same way: 'Faith is certain.... "Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt."³⁵ The relationship between *religious attitude* and science is another relevant question. Men` devotes entire pages to quoting famous scientists in order to show science and religion as allies and not enemies. In general, Men`s

³⁰ *Sources*, p. 425.

³¹ *Sources*, p. 74.

³² CCC 31.

³³ CCC 35.

³⁴ *Sources*, p. 109.

³⁵ CCC 157. Quoting NEWMAN, Cardinal John Henry. *Apologia pro vita sua*. London: Longman, 1878, p. 239.

view of *religious attitude* in this respect again coincides with the Catholic understanding of *faith*: 'methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith'.³⁶ Men` emphasises that *religious attitude* does not violate human freedom:

Every attempt at conforming one's will to the will of God is an act that originates from our freedom. God does not enslave man, nor does He enchain his will. On the contrary, He offers man every chance to reject Him.... In his union with God man finds the fullness of his own being, not some kind of miserable resignation (Russ. *покорность*).³⁷

The same idea is stated in the *Catechism* in regard to *faith*: 'Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason.'³⁸ Men` maintains that religious experiences, which underlie *religious attitude*, cannot be fully expressed with the help of words. But at the same time, he insists on the necessity of using human language:

If we leave faith (Russ. *вера*) in the sphere of undefined inner states, it will fall into the danger of becoming a kind of 'shelter' totally unrelated to our actions. The voice of God is the Voice that calls us to work, to overcome, and to serve. And this is impossible without some kind of words, concepts and symbols.... We express our religious experience by means of certain forms (myths, symbols, icons), that ... enable us to share that experience with each other.³⁹

Men` notes that some religions totally reject language as completely inadequate for communicating religious meaning, but the Christian understanding of the role of the language is different. This is one of the rare instances when he explicitly indicates some difference between Christianity and the other religions while

³⁶ CCC 159. Quoting *Gaudium et Spes* 36.

³⁷ *Sources*, pp. 110-111.

³⁸ CCC 154.

³⁹ *Sources*, p. 114.

talking about *religious attitude*. Men's position on the Christian view of language is very similar to the one expressed in the *Catechism*, which stresses the necessity for Christian believers of the 'language of faith' that enables them 'to express the faith and to hand it on, to celebrate it in community, to assimilate and live on it more and more'.⁴⁰ As seen from this comparison of Men's texts to the *Catechism*, this author's idea of *religious attitude* basically coincides with the Catholic notion of *faith* in such key areas as its relationship to human reason, free will and human language. From the Catholic perspective, problems may arise while attributing these aspects of *faith* indiscriminately to the non-biblical religions. However, since *Dominus Iesus* does not deal directly with these issues, they are not analysed here any further.

Men sees personal religious experience as the foundation of *religious attitude*. This is stressed, for example, in his definition of *religious attitude*, found in the initial pages of the volume *Magism and Monotheism*. There, Men mentions different elements from various religions by placing the monotheism of the Old Testament alongside with some polytheistic and pantheistic beliefs, and states that, in spite of the differences,

the spectrum of the world's religions displays some essential unity. This is determined by the very nature of religion, which is based upon a living experience of faith. Faith is primarily the state of the spirit, born of experiencing the reality of the Supreme Being.⁴¹

According to Men, the convincing power of personal religious experience is the source of firmness for *religious attitude*. For him, religious experience is 'the

⁴⁰ CCC 170.

⁴¹ *Magism*, pp. 7-8.

most trustworthy reality, thanks to which true faith (Russ. *подлинная вера*) rises above all conceptions and constructions of the mind, even though it does not reject them in principle.⁴² According to Men', powerful religious experiences are possible in any religion:

Encounters with God occur in every person's life, so religious experience is universal.... These meetings, however, may differ in their result: some people perceive them, but for some others they may ... remain unnoticed.⁴³

Consequently, firm religious convictions may be present in any religion. The Catholic Magisterium also affirms the possibility of firm *belief* in the non-biblical religions. For example, John Paul II states in the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*: 'the *firm belief* of the followers of the non-Christian religions ... can make Christians ashamed at being often themselves so disposed to doubt concerning the truths revealed by God'.⁴⁴ However, the Magisterium sees the firmness of *faith* as coming from a different source than the firmness of *belief*. Specifically, *faith* is founded on God's trustworthiness: 'Faith is ... founded on the very word of God who cannot lie.'⁴⁵ As it was shown above, from the Catholic viewpoint God's trustworthiness is the basis for man's assent to His self-revelation, which is not possible in *belief* regardless of its firmness.

In the volume *The Sources of Religion* Men' explains the firmness of convictions in all religions by the persuasive power of personal religious experience, and does not distinguish between Christianity and the non-biblical religions in this

⁴² *Sources*, p. 110.

⁴³ *Sources*, p. 102.

⁴⁴ *Redemptor Hominis* 6, emphasis added.

⁴⁵ CCC 157; see also *DI* 7.

respect. That is, he does not indicate that *faith* is essentially different from *belief* because *faith* involves an unconditional assent to God founded on trust in Him. The reason for this omission of Men' is not quite clear, the more so that in the other texts he does describe *faith* as involving the assent to God.⁴⁶ One of the reasons might be the fact that *The Sources of Religion* was a volume addressed to specific readers who were heavily influenced by Soviet atheist propaganda. For these people, who at best were beginners on their spiritual journey, Men' could have simplified his explanations. Kurayev draws attention to Men''s tendency to emphasise those aspects that are common to Christianity and the other religions, and explains it by Men''s attempts at presenting a kind of unified opposition to the atheistic world outlook: 'In the world of atheism it was still possible to hold that every 'spirituality' ultimately leads to Christ'.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Men' sometimes employs rather complex descriptions in the same book. Also, in some texts he does not hesitate to show the differences between Christianity and the other religions, as was the case with the different understanding of the role of language. Therefore, the only adequate explanation seems to be this: although Men' considers the *assent to God* to be part of *faith* and not part of *belief*, he does not see it as an *essential* difference. This idea is not in line with the position of *Dominus Iesus*.

⁴⁶ See a discussion on this in 6.2.1.

⁴⁷ КУРАЕВ [KURAYEV], op. cit. (1998).

6.3 Analysis of Men's Terminology Related to *Faith* and *Belief*

Men does not formally provide separate terminology for *faith* and *belief*. The purpose of analysis in section 6.3 is to determine if he differentiates between *faith* and *belief* by consistently associating them with different terms. This section is not intended as an exhaustive examination of Men's vocabulary related to *faith* and *belief*. Rather, it reviews his usage of several key words expressing these two concepts, including *вера* [*vera*], *верование* [*verovaniye*], *доверие* [*doverie*], *вероисповедание* [*veroisповyedanie*], *исповедание* [*isповyedanie*], *вероучение* [*verouchenie*], *догма* [*dogma*], and *религия* [*religiya*]. Among these eight nouns, *vera* and *verovaniye* are probably closest in their meaning to, respectively, *faith* and *belief* as they are described in *Dominus Iesus*.⁴⁸ Following here is a review of Men's usage of *vera* and *verovaniye* (subsection 6.3.1), as well as of their main synonyms and related words (6.3.2). As most of Men's works are freely available in the electronic form on the Internet, I was widely applying computer search functions for finding particular words and phrases there.

6.3.1 Men's Usage of *Vera* and *Verovaniye*

Aleksandr Men often uses the words *vera* and *verovaniye* in his writings and lectures. These Russian nouns are close in meaning, and are usually translated into English as *faith*, *belief*, *creed*, *trust*. Men employs the noun *vera* to denote

⁴⁸ In this way *vera* and *verovaniye* are used in the official Russian translation of *DI* (see Конгрегация Вероучения, Кардинал Йозеф Ратцингер. Декларация *Dominus Iesus* о единственности и спасительной вселенскости Иисуса Христа и Церкви [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church] 7; http://www.christianity.org.ru/unafides/dominus_iesus.html [5 March 2004]).

a wide range of meanings. First, he often uses it in the sense of *faith* in the Old Testament and Christianity, e.g., 'people [of Judah] remembered that their ancestors had easily reconciled their faith (Russ. *vera*) in Yahweh with serving Baal and Astarte',⁴⁹ 'the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Symbol of faith (Russ. *vera*)',⁵⁰ and 'faith (Russ. *vera*) in Christ Jesus'.⁵¹ He also uses the word *vera* in reference to the non-biblical religions in the sense of *belief*. For example, while discussing some details of religious life in primitive societies, Men' remarks: 'This belief (Russ. *vera*) made a great influence on the social structure of the ancient people's life'.⁵² Or, in his analysis of the idea of reincarnation in the non-biblical religions, he writes: 'In the numerous monuments of Egyptian religious literature on afterlife, we do not find a single indication of belief (Russ. *vera*) in the transmigration of souls.'⁵³

Men' frequently employs the noun *verovaniye* to signify some specific beliefs in the non-biblical religions. That, for example, is seen in the following remark about ancient Egyptian religions:

It sometimes happened that dynasties were overthrown, but the belief (Russ. *verovanie*) that the man who was standing at the top of the social pyramid held the keys to his subjects' happiness remained inviolable.⁵⁴

An identical meaning is present in the following statement about reincarnation:

'The likeness of the descendants to their ancestors could have influenced the

⁴⁹ *Messengers*, p. 260.

⁵⁰ *Creed*, p. 7.

⁵¹ *Christianity*, p. 27.

⁵² *Magism*, p. 35.

⁵³ *Gates*, p. 248.

⁵⁴ *Magism*, p. 99.

birth of this belief (Russ. *верование*) [in reincarnation] among the primitive tribes.⁵⁵ Sometimes the word *verovaniye* is used for signifying entire non-biblical religions, as seen in the following example: 'The Romans tried to satisfy their spiritual hunger by turning to Etruscan and Hellenic, Asian and Egyptian religions (Russ. *верование*)'.⁵⁶ Men` also uses the word *verovaniye* in reference to the Old Testament religion, e.g., 'the Israelites ... related their beliefs (Russ. *верование*) to the Revelation received by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob';⁵⁷ 'according to *beliefs* (Russ. *верование*) of the Israelites, the desert was inhabited by ... fiery serpents.'⁵⁸

The cases where Men` uses *verovaniye* in relationship to Christianity are few. For example, this is how he writes about the eschatological expectations of early Christians:

The Gospels are not verbatim accounts, so ... they could reflect the beliefs (Russ. *верование*) of the early communities. But what was it that gave rise to those beliefs (Russ. *верование*)?⁵⁹

However, it is exceptionally seldom that Men` uses *verovaniye* in regard to Christianity. Much more often he uses its verbal form *веровать* [*verovat`*] for describing Christian *faith*. However, this is done almost exclusively while quoting or paraphrasing the New Testament. In this case the verb is not Men``s choice, for he uses the Synodal translation of the Bible,⁶⁰ which constantly employs

⁵⁵ Gates, p. 254.

⁵⁶ Threshold, pp. 401-402.

⁵⁷ Magism, p. 176.

⁵⁸ Magism, p. 633, endnote no. 450.

⁵⁹ Son, p. 242.

⁶⁰ For Men``s use of the Synodal translation, see the note on p. 96, above.

verovat' for signifying *faith*. For example, in *Son of Man* the author paraphrases a part of Jesus' prayer for the unity of His disciples, which includes the phrase: 'that the world may believe (Russ. *веровать* [*verovat'*]) that thou hast sent me'.⁶¹ As for the noun *verovaniye*, it is not used in the Synodal translation, but is widely employed in the contemporary Russian Orthodox theological vocabulary when referring to Christian *faith*. For example, the opening statement in a newsletter issued by the Pskovo-Pechyorsky Monastery in 1993, reads: 'according to the faith (Russ. *верование*) of the Orthodox Church...'.⁶² In similar way *verovaniye* is used in another publication: 'God appreciates man's faith (Russ. *верование*) in Him'.⁶³ An exceptional feature of Men's works in this respect is that he employs *verovaniye* to a much lesser extent than it is commonly accepted in the Russian Orthodox Church. It is the noun *vera* that he consistently uses to signify the Christian *faith*. This choice of vocabulary can hardly be conditioned by linguistic or any other non-theological considerations, for, as it has already been shown, Men constantly uses the noun *verovaniye* in regard to the non-biblical religions and to the Old Testament. This leads to conclusion that Men consciously avoids using this noun in the sense of Christian *faith* namely for the purpose of stressing its distinctiveness.

⁶¹ *John* 17:21, paraphrased in *Son*, p. 261. For few other examples of *verovat'* in the Synodal translation, see *Matthew* 8:13, *Mark* 9:23, *John* 11:40, *Romans* 10:9, *2 Corinthians* 4:13, *Philippians* 1:29, etc.

⁶² Православный Медицинский сервер [The Orthodox Medical Server]. 'Псково-Печерский листок N10' ['Pskovo-Pechyorsky Newsletter No 10']; <http://www.pms.orthodoxy.ru/abortion/00012.htm> [31 March 2006].

⁶³ Благовест (Октябрь-декабрь 2000 г.) [Ring of Bells (October-December 2000)]. "И сказал Иисус сотнику: иди, и, как ты веровал..." ['And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed."']; <http://blagovest.al.lg.ua/0004/13.html> [12 November 2003].

On the other hand, he often employs *verovaniye* in regard to the Old Testament. This detail shows that Men` avoids using *verovaniye* to signify Christian *faith* for some other reason than the assent to God's self-revelation. For, as it was shown in 6.2.1, Men` maintains that this assent is present in both the Old Testament and Christianity. If this assent were the reason why Men` avoids referring to Christian *faith* as *verovaniye*, then for the same reason he should also avoid using *verovaniye* in reference to the Old Testament. It is therefore obvious, that Men` does make a terminological distinction between *faith* and *belief*, but for some other reason than the assent to God's self-revelation as specified in *Dominus Iesus*.

6.3.2 Men``s Usage of the Main Synonyms of *Vera* and *Verovaniye*

Men``s usage of *doverie*. The closest translation of *doverie* into English would be the noun *trust*, and *доверя́ть* [*doveryat`*] is the corresponding Russian verb form. Similarly to the English usage of the word *trust*, *doverie* and *doveryat`* may describe a variety of relationships: it is possible to trust people, God, our five senses, literary sources, traditions, etc. Men` employs *doverie* and *doveryat`* in this wide variety of situations, e.g., 'Moses' first goal was to gain trust (Russ. *доверие*) of the people and the elders',⁶⁴ 'The *rishi* turns to God with the feeling of moving trust';⁶⁵ 'The only trustworthy evidence ... is the indication that Habakkuk was a Levite';⁶⁶ 'She was healed due to her great trust in Him [i.e.,

⁶⁴ *Magism*, p. 320.

⁶⁵ *Magism*, p. 155.

⁶⁶ *Messengers*, p. 522.

Christ]'.⁶⁷ While characterising the people's attitude towards God or towards the spiritual sphere in general, Men' uses the words *doverie* and *doveryat'* indiscriminately whether for talking about Christianity or the other religions.

Men''s usage of *veroispovyedanie* and *ispovyedanie*. These two nouns are close in meaning: *veroispovyedanie* can be translated into English as *profession of faith*, and *ispovyedanie*—as *profession*, with the religious shade implied. *Veroispovyedanie* is a compound made of two words: *vera*—faith, belief, and *ispovyedanie*—profession. The noun *ispovyedanie* is used by Men' rather frequently, while *veroispovyedanie* can only be found several times. *Ispovyedanie*, however, is usually followed by the noun *vera*, thus comprising the phrase *исповедание веры* [*ispovyedanie veri*], which is practically identical to the noun *veroispovyedanie*. Both *ispovyedanie veri* and *veroispovyedanie* contain the noun *vera*. Analogically to *vera*, they are used by Men' to signify both *faith* and *belief*. In the following example, *veroispovyedanie* represents *faith* expressed through Jewish religious practices: 'Lysias ... cancelled the edict of the previous king and restored the freedom of profession of faith (Russ. *вероисповедание*) for the Jews'.⁶⁸ In the next statement, *veroispovyedanie* is used in reference to the non-biblical religions as a synonym of 'religion': 'the [Roman] Empire consisted of ... great numbers of people of different religions (Russ. *вероисповедание*)'.⁶⁹ Men' often uses *ispovyedanie veri* in regard to the biblical religions. For example, he calls some passages in the New Testament 'a

⁶⁷ *Son*, p. 424, endnote no. 1.

⁶⁸ *Threshold*, p. 325.

⁶⁹ *Culture*, p. 195.

confession of faith (Russ. *исповедание веры*) in “reconciliation” between man and heaven through Jesus Christ’.⁷⁰ Occasionally he applies *ispovyedanie veri* to the non-biblical religions as well. For example, in the following statement the phrase is used in reference to the Greek dramatist Aeschylus: ‘his profession of faith (Russ. *исповедание веры*) subsists [in believing] that the Universe is ruled by divine Truth, not by the tyranny of dark or evil forces.’⁷¹ In the same way Men’ uses the noun *ispovyedanie*. For example, in an appendix to *The Sources of Religion* Men’ presents some statistical data about various religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others, all of which are referred to as ‘religious professions (Russ. *религиозные исповедания*)’.⁷² In the next statement *ispovyedanie* is used in reference to the Old Testament: ‘The Ten Commandments is an essential profession (Russ. *исповедание*) of ethical monotheism’.⁷³ Thus, Men’'s usage of *veroispyvedanie*, *ispovyedanie* and *ispovyedanie veri* does not show any differentiation between *faith* and *belief*.

Men’'s usage of *verouchenie* and *dogma*. The noun *verouchenie* is a compound made of two words: *vera*—faith, belief, and *учение* [*uchenie*]—teaching. It means religious teaching, truth, or doctrine. Men’ uses *verouchenie* while talking about both Christianity and the other religions. For example, in the glossary of the volume *On the Threshold of the New Testament* he defines Buddhist *dharma* as ‘a synonym for doctrine (Russ. *вероучение*) and ethics’.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *Magism*, p. 535.

⁷¹ *Dionysus*, p. 135.

⁷² *Sources*, p. 261. Here Men’ contrasts these religions with the atheistic outlook.

⁷³ *Messengers*, p. 19.

⁷⁴ *Threshold*, p. 805.

In the glossary at the end of *Son of Man* the noun *verouchenie* is used for defining the Christian Tradition: 'The term Tradition also signifies the very spirit and the essence of the doctrine (Russ. *вероучение*), which are preserved by the Community of the Church.'⁷⁵ Similarly, Men' employs the interlingual word *dogma* and its Russian synonym *догмам* [*dogmat*] when speaking of both Christianity and the other religions, as well as of the atheistic outlook. For example, when discussing the Egyptian religions, Men' notes: 'An official royal religion ... professes the dogma (Russ. *догмам*) of the divine birth of the king (Russ. *царь*).'⁷⁶ In regard to Christianity, Men' widely uses these synonyms in the generally accepted way.⁷⁷ When applying them to atheism, he usually aims at showing that this world view, contrary to its claims, is based on *a priori* beliefs, not on any objective scientific data. For example, he describes atheism as a religion that 'had produced its own unquestionable authorities, dogmas (Russ. *догмы*), writings, rites, and saints'.⁷⁸ Men' uses *dogmatic* (Russ. *догматический, догматичный*), *dogmatism* (Russ. *догматизм*), and other related words without discrimination between *faith* and *belief*, too.

Men's usage of *religiya*. Men' usually employs the word *religiya* (Eng. *religion*) to signify the totality of the phenomena related to any particular system of beliefs. In addition, for him *religiya* necessarily involves a specific committed attitude of believers, which in this chapter is defined as *faith* and *belief*. Men'

⁷⁵ *Son*, p. 486.

⁷⁶ *Magism*, p. 98.

⁷⁷ See, for example, his explanation of the term *dogma* in *Son*, p. 119.

⁷⁸ *Sources*, p. 18.

widely applies *religiya* when talking about any religion of the world, as well as about atheism. The word is often employed while describing Israel during the Old Testament period, e.g.: 'the religion of the Covenant (Russ. *религия Завета*) was professed by a nation who did not establish any mighty civilisation'.⁷⁹ Very often *religiya* is applied to various non-biblical religions, as in the following statement about Greece during the period of 8th-6th century B.C.: 'because of its primitive level, this religion did not manage to satisfy the spiritual hunger of the people'.⁸⁰ Men` also uses *religiya* when characterising atheism: 'antireligious doctrines are often related to inner mystical impulses; ideological myths, accepted on faith (Russ. *принимаемые на веру*), are, in fact, a twisted [variant of] religion'.⁸¹ Men` occasionally uses the noun *religiya* in reference to Christianity, as seen from the following examples: 'the religion of the Good News is the religion for the future';⁸² 'everyone should have [at least] some understanding about the Founder [i.e., Jesus Christ] of the religion which came to be the integral part of world culture'.⁸³ However, some distinction is observed regarding Christianity in this respect, namely, Men` refers to Christianity as *religiya* much more seldom than to the other religions. On one occasion, he even states that 'Christianity is not a religion—it is God's response to our question'.⁸⁴ As it has been shown in chapter 5, he finds Christianity so exceptional due to Christ's revelation, which makes it different from the other

⁷⁹ *Son*, p. 19.

⁸⁰ *Dionysus*, p. 41.

⁸¹ *Sources*, p. 14.

⁸² *Son*, p. 318.

⁸³ *Son*, p. 12.

⁸⁴ *Answers*, p. 252, emphasis added.

religions. However, as stated in 6.1, this difference does not necessarily lead to the distinction between *faith* and *belief*. In summary, Men's usage of the nouns *doverie*, *veroisповyedanie*, *ispovyedanie*, *verouchenie*, *dogma* and *religiya* does not show any significant discrimination between *faith* and *belief*, as it is indicated in *Dominus Iesus*.

6.4 Conclusions

The purpose of chapter 6 was to determine if Aleksandr Men' makes the same distinction between *faith* and *belief* as indicated in *Dominus Iesus*. In this chapter, two different methods of research have been employed: Men's texts containing actual descriptions of *faith* and *belief* have been analysed (section 6.2), and his vocabulary related to these two concepts has been examined (section 6.3). The analysis in the first half of 6.2 has demonstrated that Men's descriptions of *faith* and *belief* include their main distinctive features as specified by *Dominus Iesus*. Specifically, Men' maintains that *faith* involves unreserved assent to God's self-revelation as embodied in Abraham's obedience of faith, while *belief* represents humankind's search for God and for absolute truth. Therefore, Men's understanding of *faith* and *belief* taken separately from each other is in line with the guidelines of *Dominus Iesus*.

However, there is a discrepancy between Men's position and that of *Dominus Iesus* on what constitutes the essential difference between *faith* and *belief*. This discrepancy can be seen in Men's descriptions of *religious attitude*, which has been analysed in 6.2.3. In these descriptions Men' indiscriminately bases the firmness of all religious convictions on the persuasive power of religious

experience, which is also applied to Christianity. He does not mention God's trustworthiness as the basis for an unconditional assent to His self-revelation in the biblical religions, and in this respect he does not differentiate *faith* from *belief*. Although Men` speaks of assent to God when specifically describing *faith*, the absence of this theme in his lengthy texts on *religious attitude* shows that he does not consider it as making a fundamental difference between *faith* and *belief*. *Dominus Iesus*, on the other hand, insists that the assent to God's self-revelation constitutes the essential distinction between them. Therefore, Men`s position is in line with the guidelines of *Dominus Iesus* in seeing a difference between *faith* and *belief*. The discrepancy between Men` and the Declaration concerns the contents of that difference. This conclusion has been confirmed by the analysis of Men`s vocabulary in 6.3. Although Men` does not formally define separate terminology for *faith* and *belief*, his choice of the key words expressing these two concepts shows that he does make a distinction between them. That distinction, however, is not based on the assent to God's self-revelation, which is uniquely present in *faith*. Therefore, it may be concluded that Men`s understanding of the difference between *faith* and *belief* is at some variance with the position of *Dominus Iesus* on this issue.

CONCLUSION

The original contribution of the present thesis consists in its assessment of Aleksandr Men's legacy in two respects. First, this is the only systematic analysis of Men's works on the world's religions, apart from an article by Yeriomin. Second, this is the first study of Men's legacy in the light of the current Catholic teaching on the relationship between Christianity and the other religions. This concluding chapter (a) summarises the findings of the research, (b) suggests possible directions for further study, and (c) indicates the practical relevance of Men's works on world religions for Catholic theology.

(a) Summary of the Findings of the Research

Fr Aleksandr Men` spent almost the whole of his life under the oppressive Soviet regime. Despite those adverse conditions, however, he managed to develop a fruitful scholarly and pastoral activity that has established him as one of the most influential Russian Orthodox writers and spiritual educators of the second half of the 20th century. An important part of his writing is devoted to the world's religions, among which his six-volume history of religions *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life* is the most significant. The main purpose of this work is pastoral: the priest was aiming to address the questions of Soviet people influenced by the atheist propaganda and to bring them to Christ. Men` presents an explicitly Christian view of the history of religions that embodies his systematically developed theological position. He sees the history of religions as an unfolding of God's plan for bringing all peoples to Himself, which turns it into the *universal history of salvation* that culminates in Jesus Christ. On the human

side, Men' views the history of religions as a history of man's search for God and of man's struggle with *Magism*. The pastoral purpose of Men''s six-volume work determined to a great extent its methods and style. It is for this purpose that Men' places special emphasis on the complementarity between science and religion, uses extensive critical apparatus and numerous quotations from original sources, and devotes special attention to the aesthetic appearance of his books. Men''s history of religions is written in an attractive literary style that unites the histories of different religions into one continuous epic narrative.

Would Aleksandr Men''s works on the world's religions 'pass the test' of the guidelines of *Dominus Iesus* on the relationship between Christianity and the other religions? At first glance, the document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith seems to differ sharply in many respects from Men''s openness and toleration. The main purpose of the Declaration is to oppose the spread of religious relativism. The document includes censuring and declarative statements, followed by periodically repeated formulas that indicate the precise degree of assent required of the Catholic faithful. The method and the literary genre of the Declaration emphasise its doctrinal authority, too. After its promulgation in September 2000, *Dominus Iesus* was met with harsh disapproval by a number of Christians and non-Christians who criticised it as seriously hindering the ecumenical and inter-religious dialogues. Therefore, it seems that significant differences between the theological positions taken by *Dominus Iesus* and Aleksandr Men' should be expected. This analysis has shown, however, that this first impression is far from being correct.

The present research has examined Men's views in regard to four out of nine doctrinal areas addressed by *Dominus Iesus*.¹ Chapter 4 concentrated on the Declaration's guidelines regarding 'the personal unity between the Eternal Word and Jesus of Nazareth, ... [and] the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ'.² The analysis has shown that Men's position on these issues is in line with that of *Dominus Iesus*. Specifically, Men sees Jesus Christ as absolutely unique among the other religious leaders due to His divine nature. This essential difference between Him and the others, according to Men, makes Christ's relationship to the Logos absolutely exclusive. Men also stresses that Jesus of Nazareth is the only mediator of salvation, and His mediation is universal, i.e., it encompasses all times and all humankind. According to Men, this universality of the mediation of salvation is also based on Christ's divinity: He alone can save because He is the God-man; no other religious leaders are able to save because they are mere human beings who are in need of salvation themselves. Chapter 5 focused on the guidelines of *Dominus Iesus* regarding the relationship between the revelation of Jesus Christ and the teachings and practices of the non-biblical religions. This analysis has shown that Men's views are again in line with the position of *Dominus Iesus*. Specifically, Men maintains that the non-biblical religions contain both elements of truth and religious errors. The elements of truth, according to him, constitute a preparation for the Gospel, and they are closely related to Jesus Christ. As to Christ's revelation, for Men it means the fullness and completeness of revealed truth that does not need to be

¹ The nine doctrinal areas considered in *Dominus Iesus* were overviewed in 3.4 (see especially p. 130 ff.).

² DI 4.

complemented by any elements of truth present in the other religions. Finally, Men` explicitly asserts that religious relativism cannot be reconciled with the authentic Christian attitude towards the non-biblical religions.

Chapter 6 centered on Men`s views about the difference between *faith* in Christianity and *belief* in the non-biblical religions. In contrast to the other areas, this analysis revealed some variance between Men`s position and that of *Dominus Iesus*. On the one hand, Men`s understanding of *faith* and *belief* when taken *separately* from each other is essentially the same as that of the Declaration. This means that Men` sees some theological difference between these notions, which is confirmed by his choice of the vocabulary related to *faith* and *belief*. However, Men`s view differs from that of *Dominus Iesus* in regard to what precisely differentiates *faith* from *belief*. According to the Declaration, it is the assent to God's self-revelation that makes an essential distinction between them. Men`, on the other hand, views the assent to God's self-revelation as part of the difference between *faith* and *belief*, but, unlike the Declaration, he does not consider this difference to be essential.

In summary, Men`s position has proved to agree with the guidelines of *Dominus Iesus* in three out of the four doctrinal areas investigated. In the fourth area, the two attitudes agree on the fundamental level, while some variance occurs in regard to some details. Therefore, this study has demonstrated that before the appearance of *Dominus Iesus*, Men` had already developed an explicitly Christian approach to the world's religions, which for the most part coincides with the Catholic position presented later in the Declaration.

(b) Areas for Further Studies

It is obvious that this thesis is only a small step in assessing the legacy of Aleksandr Men'. In 1996, Shukman stated that 'full assessment of Fr Alexander as a scholar and thinker is a task for the future',³ and this still holds true ten years later. From the perspective of *Dominus Iesus*, two large areas in Men''s works merit investigation. The first is his view of the uniqueness of the divine inspiration that differentiates the Bible from the sacred writings of the non-biblical religions. This research should not be restricted to Men''s works on religions of the world; it should also consider his voluminous writings on biblical studies. In addition, a complete evaluation of Men''s views in the light of the Catholic teaching would need to take into account the broader context of the Russian Orthodox theology on this issue. The ecclesiological and ecumenical questions considered in *Dominus Iesus* and in related magisterial documents could define the second large area for studying Men''s works. This kind of research would need to take into account the broad spectrum of Men''s writings where his views on the relationship between various Christian denominations are being displayed.

An evaluation of Men''s works on the religions of the world from the perspective of religious studies would be another area of fruitful investigation closely related to the present thesis. In this area, at least two branches of research should be considered. First, it is important to identify with more precision the sources and

³ SHUKMAN, Ann. 'Introduction'. In *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century. The Prophetic Writings of Alexander Men*, eds. Elizabeth ROBERTS, Ann SHUKMAN, 23. New York: Continuum, 1996.

influences behind Men's history of religions. Such a study could contribute to the on-going dispute over Men's originality. Second, Men's factual descriptions of particular religions should be examined from the perspective of religious studies. Although Men's knowledge of the historical facts is obviously outdated in comparison to the factual data available today, it is worth asking: how does the present-day information fit Men's concept of the history of religions formed half a century ago? Such an investigation might help us to understand better the reasons for Men's selectivity regarding the facts included into his descriptions of world's religions. Beside these possible research areas that are directly related to the present thesis, a number of other important themes have been developed in Men's writings and deserve scholarly attention.

(c) Relevance of Men's Works on the World's Religions for Contemporary Catholic Theology

Since Aleksandr Men's tragic death, the interest in his life and work keeps increasing both in his motherland and in the Western countries. Shukman wrote in the 1990s,

Five years have passed since Fr Alexander's death and the number and influence of his followers continue to grow. His books are now freely available in Russia. A university has been founded in his name in Moscow. An annual international commemorative conference draws people from many walks of life who have come to share his understanding of ... Christianity....⁴

⁴ SHUKMAN, Ann. 'Introduction'. In *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century. The Prophetic Writings of Alexander Men*, eds. Elizabeth ROBERTS, Ann SHUKMAN, 2. New York: Continuum, 1996. The University mentioned by Shukman is the Open Orthodox University founded by Archpriest Aleksandr Men' (Russ. *Общедоступный Православный Университет основанный протоиереем Александром Менем*). It was started in Moscow in 2000. There is an English page of the University: Father Alexander Menn Orthodox Open University; <http://www.educenter.sitek.ru/engpage.htm> [10 April 2004].

An increasing interest in Men's legacy outside Russia is testified by a growing number of his publications in about ten languages.⁵ This shows his ideas as relevant to the problems and controversies that affect Christians everywhere in the world. In Men's writings, Western Christians of various denominations are discovering the Russian Orthodoxy that, in the words of an American scholar, is 'renewed, made alive and related to contemporary problems of secular society'.⁶ It can be hoped, therefore, that the present study will promote further interest in Men's legacy, particularly in his history of religions *In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life*, which has presently been somewhat neglected in the West. An important step would be the translation of this work into Western languages.

Men's writings on the world's religions might particularly interest Catholic theologians that seek to respond to the invitation made in *Dominus Iesus*, namely:

Faced with certain problematic and even erroneous propositions, theological reflection is called to *reconfirm* the Church's faith and to give reasons for her hope in a way that is *convincing* and *effective*.⁷

As this study has shown, in his works Aleksandr Men' has *reconfirmed* a number of the same truths that are defended by *Dominus Iesus*. The popularity and pastoral effectiveness of Men's writings among the Russian-speaking

⁵ Bibliography of some translations of Men's works into foreign languages is available at: КРОТОВ, Яков [KROTOV, Yakov]. 'Библиотека Якова Кротова. Александр Мень: Библиография. Библиография на иностранных языках' ['Library of Yakov Krotov. Aleksandr Men': Bibliography. Bibliography in Foreign Languages']; http://www.krotov.info/library/m/menn/ bibl_in.htm [1 May 2006].

⁶ SERGEEV, Mikhail. 'Liberal Orthodoxy: from Vladimir Solov'ev to Fr. Alexander Men'. *Religion in Eastern Europe* XXIV, no. 4 (August 2003); <http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/2003/sergeev03.html> [30 September 2003].

⁷ DI 23, emphasis added.

readers indicate that he has accomplished this in a way that is *convincing* and *effective*. In their efforts to take up the call of *Dominus Iesus*, Catholic theologians are facing a challenging task: on the one hand, they have to explicitly uphold the faith in the unique and universal role of Jesus Christ; on the other, every religion must be respected and appreciated—this is the only attitude that can help to intensify the inter-religious dialogue and to make the missionary activity possible. The present research has demonstrated that Fr Aleksandr Men' has already achieved remarkable progress in this respect that should be taken into account. His approach to the world's religions may well be as effective in strengthening Christian faith in the West, as it once did behind the Iron Curtain.

APPENDIX 1. 'CHRISTIANITY'¹

And so together we have reached the end of our journey which has taken us through the ages, around the world philosophies, and we have come to the summit, to that sparkling mountain spring wherein the sun is reflected, which is called Christianity.

Though Christianity has of course thrown down a challenge to many philosophical and religious systems, it is at the same time an answer to the hopes present in the majority of them. The strongest impulse in Christian spirituality is not to deny, but to affirm, to include and to complete.

We saw how Buddhism is permeated with a passionate longing for deliverance from evil, a striving for salvation – Buddha said that as the waters of the seas are saturated with salt, so his teaching, dharma, is drenched with the idea of salvation: so too is that same longing for salvation, the promise of salvation, inherent to Christianity, to the New Testament.

¹ Appendix 1 includes an English translation of Aleksandr Men's lecture 'Christianity'. This lecture contains the last words said by Fr Men in public. Within less than the next twelve hours, he was brutally killed with some sharp heavy object, most probably an axe, by a blow on the head. Those who had known him well are telling that Aleksandr Men had seemed aware of the closeness of death, especially during the last week of his life. He left an extensive legacy of books and lectures. 'Christianity' is probably the most famous text by Fr Aleksandr, a kind of his 'final testament'. Because of its topic, this lecture represents Men's work on the religions of the world rather well.

The translation of the lecture included here is taken from: MEN, Alexander. 'Christianity for the Twenty-First Century'. In *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century. The Prophetic Writings of Alexander Men*, eds. Elizabeth ROBERTS, Ann SHUKMAN, 179-192. New York: Continuum, 1996. Used with permission of the translator, Ann SHUKMAN, and of Fr Aleksandr Men Foundation in Moscow. Comments in square brackets are given in the translation.

We saw how Islam teaches the absolute devotion of man to God, the God who is sovereign lord of the cosmos and judge of mankind: and we find the same in Christianity.

We saw how in the Chinese world view heaven – *tyan* – is a reference point for people on their life's journey (even in small things): so it is also in Christianity.

Brahmanism, contemporary Hinduism, speaks of the many forms in which the divine is manifest: so does Christianity.

Finally, pantheism declares that God is in everything, that he is a mysterious force permeating every drop, every atom of the universe: and Christianity is in agreement with this, though it teaches that the activity of God is not limited only to a pantheistic omnipresence.

But we would be mistaken to assume that Christianity is an eclectic doctrine which simply gathers to itself all the elements of previous belief systems. Something new and tremendously powerful is manifest in Christianity. The newness is not just a doctrine, but the inrush of a different life into this, our daily lives.

The great teachers of humanity, the authors of the *Upanishads*, Lao-Zi, Confucius, Buddha, Muhammad, Socrates, Plato and others perceived the truth to be like the summit of a high mountain which they ascended with the greatest difficulty. They were right because the truth is not something easily grasped. Truth is indeed like a high mountain that has to be climbed: we gasp for breath,

clambering from ledge to ledge, at times looking back at the path behind, aware that yet another steep slope still lies ahead.

I shall never forget the remarkable words about truth spoken by the simple Himalayan mountaineer Tensing, the Sherpa who climbed Everest with [the New Zealander] Hillary. He said that we must approach mountains with reverence, and God in the same way. Indeed mountains demand a certain mind-set in order to grasp their magnificence and their beauty. Truth lies hidden from people who rush at it without reverence, who set out unprepared, disregarding the dangers, precipices and crevasses.

It is the mark of human history to strive upwards. You may well object: think how many steps there have been leading downwards. Yes, of course; at first glance there are more steps leading downwards; more people who have fallen and rolled down into the abyss. But the important thing is that human beings have all the same kept attempting to climb to this summit above the clouds, and the greatness of humanity lies in the fact that people have the capacity to reach the peaks of intellectual and spiritual contemplation, to reach what Pushkin called 'the neighbourhood of God'.

Human beings have two countries, two homelands. One is our own country, that place where each of us was born and grew up. But the other is that hidden world of the spirit which the eye may not see and the ear may not hear but where, by our nature, we belong. We are children of the earth and at the same time visitors to it.

In their spiritual searchings, people give rein to their higher nature far more than when they are making war, ploughing, sowing, or building. Termites also build, ants sow (there are such species of ant), and monkeys fight, in their own way, though not as cruelly as people, it is true. No living being, however, except humans, has ever pondered on the meaning of life, has ever risen above the physical needs of nature.

No living creature, except human beings, has the capacity to take a risk, even the risk of death, in the name of truth, for the sake of something which cannot be held in the hand. Thousands of martyrs of all times and nations exemplify this phenomenon, unique in the history of our entire solar system.

When we turn to the Gospels we find ourselves in another world; not the world of thrilling searches, and assaults on heaven, which I have been describing. With the Gospels we face the mystery of an answer. For twenty-five years, Prince Siddhartha Gautama, the future Buddha, undertook ascetic exercises in order to attain contemplation. In the same way, yogis, philosophers and ascetics have all laboured mentally, spiritually and psycho-physically.

But Jesus Christ came from a simple village, where he lived the life of an ordinary person. In him everything was already prepared. He did not clamber up anywhere; on the contrary he came down to people's level.

All the great sages have been conscious of their ignorance. Socrates said 'I know that I know nothing'. The great saints of all ages and all peoples have been much more acutely aware of their sinfulness than you or I because they

were closer to the light and every stain on their life and conscience was much more apparent to them than ours are to us in our grey lives.

Jesus Christ had no consciousness of his own sinfulness, nor any sense that he had achieved anything. He came to people bringing to them what was in him from the beginning, by nature.

At this point I must stress the fact that Jesus did not begin to preach Christianity as some kind of intellectual system. What he proclaimed to the people, he called [in Hebrew] *besorah*, in Greek, *evangelion*, which means 'glad tidings', 'good news'. So what was this good news?

Human beings have the right not to trust the created world. Human beings have the right to feel themselves to be in an alien and hostile world. Such contemporary writers as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and others often spoke about the terrible absurdity of existence: we are surrounded by something menacing, inhuman, meaningless, absurd, something which cannot be trusted – a cold, dead or lifeless world. True, I must point out that these writers, novelists, playwrights and philosophers were writing from an atheistic point of view. These atheistic existentialists somehow failed to notice one thing. When they said that the world is absurd, that it is meaningless, they thought like this only because the contrary idea, the idea of meaning, is inherent to human beings. Someone who does not know what meaning is, has not experienced it, can never understand what absurdity is, will never object to it, never rebel against it; that person will live in it like a fish in water. And it is precisely because a person can

rise up against the absurd, against the meaninglessness of existence, which shows that meaning does exist.

To come back to the point: the ancient biblical prophets tell us that we can make an internal change and say 'yes' to existence and trust what seemed terrible and menacing. And then through the chaos, the absurdity, through the monstrosity of life, will peer the eye of God, like the sun shining through the storm clouds, the eye of a God whose person is reflected in each human person.

And contact with God is possible, like an alliance between similar beings. The point of all this is the amazing analogy between humanity and the one who created the cosmos. Once Charles Darwin said that although he interpreted the world mechanically, as a process, yet all the same, when he thought about the complexity of it, he could never accept that blind chance could have caused it all; shouldn't one then see some kind of reason behind it all, a reason that in some way is analogous to our own? We must add that this reason is not simply analogous to ours, but immensely surpasses it.

In the religion of the Old Testament, which we have discussed [in a previous lecture], there developed the notion of faith as trust. Not faith as a conviction, whether theoretical, philosophical or religious, but faith as the act of breaking through the absurdity of lifeless reality, the moment when a person says to God 'Yes, I accept, I am listening.' So the ancient covenant between God and humanity was born, the ancient alliance.

Naturally, the alliance between the primitive people of ancient times and the divine could not be final and complete: this was the period of human nurturing, the childhood of the human race, followed by its adolescence. In the seventh century before our era, the prophet Jeremiah said, 'Thus says the Lord, I will make with my people a New Covenant, ([Hebrew] *berit hadas* – a new testament, a new alliance), not like the old one, the former one. I will write it on their hearts' [Jer. 31.31-33 paraphrased].

And then one night the sacrifice was celebrated. Seven hundred years after the prophet Jeremiah, in a small room, twelve men gathered together for the sacrifice. Usually the sacrifice was made with blood, for blood is the symbol of life, and life belongs to God alone; and the members of the group, gathered together, would be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrificial animal. This is how it was done among all peoples since distant primordial times, since the palaeolithic age. Moses, when he concluded the covenant of the people with God, sprinkled everyone with the blood of the sacrificial lamb.

That night I was speaking of, in the spring of the thirtieth year of the first century of our era, Jesus of Nazareth, surrounded by the twelve, celebrated the ritual – the memorial of the freedom which God bestows. There was no blood, but a chalice of wine and bread. And he broke this bread and gave it to them all and said, 'This is my body.' And he passed the chalice round the disciples and said, 'This is my blood, which is shed for you, this is the new covenant of my blood.'

And so, at this holy table God and humanity were joined together, no longer with real physical blood but with the symbolic blood of the earth, for grape juice,

wine, is the blood of the earth, and bread is the flesh of the earth, is nature who feeds us, is God who sacrifices himself for people.

Jesus of Nazareth celebrated this sacrifice, and from that moment, from that holy night the chalice has not ceased to be raised up and the eucharist celebrated. In all branches of Christianity, in all churches, even in the sects, this sign is everywhere present.

People sometimes say that Christ proclaimed a new moral code. He said 'A new commandment I give you – love one another as I have loved you.' There had been an earlier commandment about love. The words 'Love your neighbour as yourself' come from Moses. But Christ gave the commandment a quite special note by adding 'as I have loved you', because through his love for humanity he stayed with us on this dirty, bloodstained and sinful earth, just to be beside us. His love, in fact, became self-giving love, and that's why he said 'Whoever wants to follow me, let them deny themselves.' Deny, that is, our individualism, not our personality; certainly not our personality, which is sacred, but our false identity, our individualism. 'Let each one of you,' he says, 'sacrifice yourselves, take up your cross, that is, your service in suffering and in joy, and then follow me.'

Christ calls people to bring the divine ideal to reality. Only short-sighted people imagine that Christianity has already happened, that it took place, say, in the thirteenth century, or the fourth, or some other time. I would say that it has only made the first hesitant steps in the history of the human race.

Many words of Christ are still incomprehensible to us even now, because we are still Neanderthals in spirit and morals; because the arrow of the Gospels is aimed at eternity; because the history of Christianity is only beginning. What has happened already, what we now call the history of Christianity, are the first half-clumsy, unsuccessful attempts to make it a reality.

You may object: then how is it that in Russia we have had such great artists, such profound icon painters, as Andrei Rublev. Yes of course, there have been great saints too; they were the forerunners. They lived against a background of a dark sea of mud, blood and tears. Obviously, that was what Tarkovsky wanted to emphasize in his film *Andrei Rublev*² (or maybe he didn't want to and it just turned out like that involuntarily). Think for a moment about the historical circumstances in which the icon painter produced his tender, magical, divinely-inspired vision of the Trinity; in what conditions? What the film showed is true: wars, tortures, betrayals, violence, conflagrations, destruction. In such circumstances someone who is not enlightened by God could create only pictures like Goya's *Los Caprichios*.³ But Rublev created a divine vision. So he must have derived it not from the reality around him, but from the spiritual world.

Christianity is not a new ethical system, but a new life which leads us into direct contact with God. It is a new alliance, a New Testament. And what does the mystery consist of? How are we to understand it? Why are people drawn to the

² [Tarkovsky's film *Andrei Rublev* (1969) depicts the violence of late fourteenth century Russia rather than the spiritual significance of the iconpainter.]

³ [Francisco Goya's series of satirical etchings, *Los Caprichios*.]

person of Jesus Christ, as if to a magnet, although he came to a disparaged world, and he had nothing in him of the mysteriousness either of the Indian sages or of the exotic poetry of Eastern philosophy?

Everything that he said was simple, clear, and even the examples in his parables were taken from daily life. This is the mystery which he revealed in a few short words. We heard them in St John's Gospel when Philip said, 'Show us the Father, the Father of all.' He, whom the Greeks called *Arche*, the first cause, where is he? Jesus replied as no other philosopher on earth had ever replied: 'How long have I been with you, and you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father.' He said this more than once, and many people turned their backs on him and went away indignantly, because these words have always been a challenge. People had to grasp this special mystery.

Christ never formulated the mystery in plain words. He only asked 'What do people take me for? A prophet? The risen John the Baptist? But you?' – 'You are the Christ, the Anointed One, the King, the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.' To express this there has to be some inner experience, and Christ still puts the question to each one of us, because he is God speaking with human lips.

Jesus Christ is the human face of the infinite, the ineffable, the inscrutable, the unbounded, the nameless. And Lao Zi was right when he said that the name we pronounce is not the eternal name. Yes, God is nameless and incomprehensible. But Christ who bears the burdens of life with us is named

with a personal name, a human name – this is the centre and the core of Christianity.

When we pass from the Gospels to the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles we must look at another personality of the New Testament. One French scholar has said that the New Testament consists of two biographies, that of Jesus Christ and that of his follower, Paul of Tarsus, the apostle Paul. Of course any of us passing from the Gospels to Paul's Epistles will feel they have fallen from heaven to earth, though in many respects Paul outshone the evangelists.

He was a man of enormous talent, spiritual energy, learning, his writings are very personal. The Epistles are written with his heart's blood. To compare them with the Gospels is anyway difficult because the Gospels reflect not so much the literary gifts of the evangelists as the model person which they had before their eyes. And if the apostle Paul stood before us, we would see merely a man, whereas Christ is the revelation of God.

But why is Paul important to us? Why did the church put him next to Christ in the New Testament? Why are most of the Epistles – fourteen of them – written in his name? Why, in the Acts of the Apostles, does his biography take up the lion's share? The whole point is that in actual fact Paul never saw Jesus face to face during his earthly life, though there are some historical conjectures that their paths may have crossed in Jerusalem.

Paul himself was born in the first years of our era in Asia Minor, but he studied in Jerusalem and might have seen Jesus there. But still we can confidently

assume that he didn't ever see him. I think this is why the church is drawn to the personality of the apostle for we too have never seen that face. But Christ appeared to Paul with a vividness that far surpasses any outward encounter.

Christ's enemies too saw him from the outside; the scribes, the Pharisees and Pilate, but they were not saved. Paul was an enemy as well, but Christ stopped him on the road to Damascus and called him to be an apostle. This event changed not only his destiny, but also the destiny of the early church, because Paul became one of those who brought the gospel out of Syria and Palestine to the wide world. He was called the apostle to the nations or the apostle to the Gentiles.

Schooled in Judaism, Paul perfectly knew that truth that it was impossible to be merged with God. Someone from the East, who thinks that in ecstasy they have experienced a mystical union with the absolute is mistaken: they can only have just brushed against the absolute because in the divine depths burns the eternal fire which consumes everything in itself. Between the Creator and the created lies an abyss, like the abyss between the absolute and the contingent: we can never leap over, neither logically nor existentially.

Yet there is a bridge thrown over this abyss, and Paul experienced this bridge himself because he saw Christ and was inwardly united to him. Eternal love bound him to Christ so that it seemed to him that he bore on himself the wounds of Christ, that he died with him on the cross and was resurrected with him. He said: 'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. Together with him, I died, and together with him I have risen to life' [Gal. 2.20].

We cannot merge with God, but we can with the God-man, for he belongs simultaneously to two worlds, ours and the world beyond. The entire path of the Christian mystics from Paul to the present day is based on this – the way to the Father is only through the Son. 'I am the door,' says Christ, 'I am the gateway to heaven.'

In their repetition of various set phrases, Christian ascetics may be compared to the ascetics of the East, of India, who repeat their mantras. There is a similarity and a parallel. But one of the chief prayers of Christian devotion is called the 'Jesus Prayer'⁴ in which is repeated the name of the one who was born and lived on earth, who was crucified and rose again.

The Christ-centredness of this important Christian prayer radically distinguishes it from all other meditations and mantras, because during this prayer a meeting takes place. The prayer is not simply a means of focussing one's thoughts, not simply a way of concentrating, not simply immersion in some ocean or depths of spirituality, but a meeting face to face between the person praying and Jesus Christ who stands above the world and in the world.

A prose-poem by Turgenev comes to mind.⁵ He was in a village church and suddenly felt that Christ was standing by him. Turning round, he saw an ordinary man. And then, when he turned back, he again felt that Christ was there. This is

⁴ [In its simplest form the Jesus Prayer runs 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner'.]

⁵ [Reference to I. S. Turgenev's prose-poem 'Christ'. See *Poems in Prose* in Russian and English, edited by André Mazon, English translations by Constance Garnett and Roger Rees, Basil Blackwell 1951, pp. 139, 141.]

true, this is how it is, because the reason that the church of Christ exists and evolves is that he stands within it.

Notice that Christ did not leave Christianity with a single line of writing, as Plato left us his Dialogues. He did not leave us tablets, with the law inscribed on them, like the tablets that Moses left. He did not dictate the Koran like Muhammad. He did not organize an order like Buddha. But he said to us, 'I will be with you always, until the close of the age' [Matt. 28.20].

When his disciples felt he was leaving them, he spoke some prophetic and eternal words: 'I do not leave you orphaned but I will come back to you,' and this continues and is happening today. All the deepest Christian experience is founded only on this; all the rest, as it were, are superficial layers. In all the rest, Christianity looks like the other religions.

World religions are a part of culture. They grow up along with the urge of the human spirit towards eternity, towards values that are unchanging. But with Christianity the stream flows from on high, from heaven, and that's why one of the theologians of our century was right to say, 'Christianity is not one among other religions – it is the crisis of all religions.' It rises above all others because, as the apostle Paul said, 'No one is saved by works of the law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ' [Rom. 3.20-22].

In conclusion, I must explain this key phrase. What are these works of the law? They are a system of religious rites and regulations. Are they necessary? Yes they are. They were instituted by people as a means of education, sometimes

with great insights, sometimes simply on the strength of tradition, sometimes in error. The works of the law . . . sometimes these laws come from divine revelation, as in the Old Testament; but at a particular phase of intellectual and spiritual development.

But what does it mean to be saved? It means uniting one's ephemeral temporal life with the immortal, with God – that's what salvation is.

Communion with the divine life. The thirst for this communion lives in us, in everyone. It is a hidden, secret thirst. We may drive it somewhere inside, but it still exists in people. To come back to the point: the apostle said that the law is sacred, the Old Testament law is sacred and good and God gave it, but communion with the divine life is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ.

And again, what does faith in Jesus Christ mean? Faith in the fact that this man lived on earth? That is not faith but knowledge. His contemporaries remembered that he lived. The evangelists have left us reliable evidence. A historian of today will tell you, yes, that's how it was. Attempts by various propagandists to assert that Christ was a myth have long since been demolished. Only in our country, that museum of all kinds of eccentricities, is this theory preserved. And what does it imply to believe in Christ? Belief in the fact that he came from other worlds? That's also true, but it's just theory.

At this point we must recall the faith that was announced in the Old Testament: trust in existence. When Abraham said 'yes' to God, or more correctly, didn't say anything, but quietly obeyed God's call, that was when faith was born.

In ancient Hebrew faith sounds like *omuna*, from the word *omen* – steadfast. 'Faith' is a concept very close to the concept of 'faithfulness'. God was faithful to his own promise; the people were faithful to God. Weak and sinful they may have been, but still they were faithful to God. But to what kind of God? To a God who was hidden and terrible, a God, like the universe, a God who at times was distant from people, like the ocean.

But Christ revealed another face of God in himself. He never addresses God other than as Father. Jesus Christ hardly ever uses the word God, he always calls him Father. And in his earthly life, he used a tender and affectionate word [*abba*], which children use in the East when speaking to their father. It is untranslatable, but that's how it is.

Christ reveals God to us as our heavenly Father, and by this revelation we are made brothers and sisters to one another, for brothers and sisters are those who have a common father.

And now we know that our common spiritual Father is God, and our hearts are opened to the good news of Jesus; that is the mystery of the Gospels.

Anyone of you knows perfectly well how confused people are, how weak, how many complications and sins have taken root in us. But there is a power which Christ left on earth, which is given to us for free: it is called grace. In Russian the word is *blagodat'* – 'the good' [*blago*] which is 'given' [*dat'*] for free. You don't have to work for it, it's a gift.

Yes, we must make an effort, yes, we must struggle against sin, yes, we must work for self-perfection; but we have to remember that we can't pull ourselves up by our own boot laces. And these efforts are only preparatory. This is the basic difference between Christianity and yoga: for yoga believes that we can reach to God and break in on him by our own volition.

Christianity, on the other hand, says: you may work to perfect yourself, but you can't reach God until he comes to you. Thus grace surpasses the law.

The law is the first stage of religion which begins with the child: you can't do this, you may do that, here are some rules and some norms. Do we need all this? Yes, of course, we do. But then comes grace – through the inner experience of a meeting with God. It is like love, like exultation, it is like a victory, like the music of the spheres. Grace is new life.

The apostle Paul said, 'People are arguing among themselves. Some are supporters of the old rites of the Old Testament, others are against them, but neither the one nor the other is of consequence. The only important thing is the new creation, and faith active in love.' This is true Christianity, all the rest is a historical shell, a framework, something circumstantial, to do with culture.

I am talking about the very essence of the Christian faith. The eternal value of the human personality, the victory of light over death and corruption, the New Testament, which grows, like a tree, out of a little acorn. The New Testament which permeates history, as the leaven does dough, so even today the kingdom of God is coming secretly among the people.

When you do good, when you love, when you contemplate beauty, when you feel the fullness of life, the kingdom of God is already touching you. The kingdom is not something only in the distant future, in a futurological conjecture, but it exists here and now. So Jesus Christ taught us. The kingdom will come but is already here. The judgment of the world is to come but has already started. 'Now is the judgment of this world,' said Jesus. Now, that is, meaning the moment when he first proclaimed the gospel.

And he also said that the judgment is seen in the fact that the light has come into the world, but the people have preferred darkness. This judgment began at the time of his preaching in Galilee, at Jerusalem, at Golgotha, in the Roman empire, in mediaeval Europe, in Russia, today in the twentieth century and in the twenty-fifth century, and throughout all human history the judgment will continue because it is Christian history, it is history in which the world walks with the Son of Man.

So if we once again ask ourselves the question, what is the essence of Christianity, then we must answer: it is God-manhood, the joining of the finite and temporal human spirit with the eternal Divinity, it is the sanctification of the flesh, for from that moment when the Son of Man took on our joys and our sufferings, our love, our labours, from that moment, nature, the world, everything in which he was, in which he rejoiced, as a man and as God-man, no longer is rejected, no longer is degraded but is raised up to a new level, and is sanctified.

Christianity is the sanctification of the world, the victory over evil, over darkness, over sin. But it is the victory of God. It began on the night of the resurrection, and it will continue as long as the world exists.

APPENDIX 2. DECLARATION *DOMINUS IESUS* ON THE UNICITY AND SALVIFIC UNIVERSALITY OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE CHURCH¹

INTRODUCTION

1. The *Lord Jesus*, before ascending into heaven, commanded his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world and to baptize all nations: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned" (*Mk* 16:15-16); "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the world" (*Mt* 28:18-20; cf. *Lk* 24:46-48; *Jn* 17:18,20,21; *Acts* 1:8).

The Church's universal mission is born from the command of Jesus Christ and is fulfilled in the course of the centuries in the proclamation of the mystery of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the mystery of the incarnation of the Son, as saving event for all humanity. The fundamental contents of the profession of the Christian faith are expressed thus: "I believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being

¹ Appendix 2 contains a full English text of the Declaration *Dominus Iesus* as found in the official website of the Vatican at: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. 'Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church'; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html [3 May 2006].

with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come".¹

2. In the course of the centuries, the Church has proclaimed and witnessed with fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus. At the close of the second millennium, however, this mission is still far from complete.² For that reason, Saint Paul's words are now more relevant than ever: "Preaching the Gospel is not a reason for me to boast; it is a necessity laid on me: woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16). This explains the Magisterium's particular attention to giving reasons for and supporting the evangelizing mission of the Church, above all in connection with the religious traditions of the world.³

In considering the values which these religions witness to and offer humanity, with an open and positive approach, the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions states: "The Catholic

Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and teachings, which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men".⁴ Continuing in this line of thought, the Church's proclamation of Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life" (*Jn* 14:6), today also makes use of the practice of inter-religious dialogue. Such dialogue certainly does not replace, but rather accompanies the *missio ad gentes*, directed toward that "mystery of unity", from which "it follows that all men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit".⁵ Inter-religious dialogue, which is part of the Church's evangelizing mission,⁶ requires an attitude of understanding and a relationship of mutual knowledge and reciprocal enrichment, in obedience to the truth and with respect for freedom.⁷

3. In the practice of dialogue between the Christian faith and other religious traditions, as well as in seeking to understand its theoretical basis more deeply, new questions arise that need to be addressed through pursuing new paths of research, advancing proposals, and suggesting ways of acting that call for attentive discernment. In this task, the present Declaration seeks to recall to Bishops, theologians, and all the Catholic faithful, certain indispensable elements of Christian doctrine, which may help theological reflection in developing solutions consistent with the contents of the faith and responsive to the pressing needs of contemporary culture.

The expository language of the Declaration corresponds to its purpose, which is not to treat in a systematic manner the question of the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church, nor to propose solutions to questions that are matters of free theological debate, but rather to set forth again the doctrine of the Catholic faith in these areas, pointing out some fundamental questions that remain open to further development, and refuting specific positions that are erroneous or ambiguous. For this reason, the Declaration takes up what has been taught in previous Magisterial documents, in order to reiterate certain truths that are part of the Church's faith.

4. The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only *de facto* but also *de iure* (or *in principle*). As a consequence, it is held that certain truths have been superseded; for example, the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, the inspired nature of the books of Sacred Scripture, the personal unity between the Eternal Word and Jesus of Nazareth, the unity of the economy of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit, the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the universal salvific mediation of the Church, the inseparability — while recognizing the distinction — of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, and the subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church.

The roots of these problems are to be found in certain presuppositions of both a philosophical and theological nature, which hinder the understanding and

acceptance of the revealed truth. Some of these can be mentioned: the conviction of the elusiveness and inexpressibility of divine truth, even by Christian revelation; relativistic attitudes toward truth itself, according to which what is true for some would not be true for others; the radical opposition posited between the logical mentality of the West and the symbolic mentality of the East; the subjectivism which, by regarding reason as the only source of knowledge, becomes incapable of raising its “gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being”;⁸ the difficulty in understanding and accepting the presence of definitive and eschatological events in history; the metaphysical emptying of the historical incarnation of the Eternal Logos, reduced to a mere appearing of God in history; the eclecticism of those who, in theological research, uncritically absorb ideas from a variety of philosophical and theological contexts without regard for consistency, systematic connection, or compatibility with Christian truth; finally, the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church.

On the basis of such presuppositions, which may evince different nuances, certain theological proposals are developed — at times presented as assertions, and at times as hypotheses — in which Christian revelation and the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church lose their character of absolute truth and salvific universality, or at least shadows of doubt and uncertainty are cast upon them.

I. THE FULLNESS AND DEFINITIVENESS OF THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

5. As a remedy for this relativistic mentality, which is becoming ever more common, it is necessary above all to reassert the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ. In fact, it must be *firmly believed* that, in the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6), the full revelation of divine truth is given: “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (Mt 11:27); “No one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed him” (Jn 1:18); “For in Christ the whole fullness of divinity dwells in bodily form” (Col 2:9-10).

Faithful to God’s word, the Second Vatican Council teaches: “By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines forth in Christ, who is at the same time the mediator and the fullness of all revelation”.⁹ Furthermore, “Jesus Christ, therefore, the Word made flesh, sent ‘as a man to men’, ‘speaks the words of God’ (Jn 3:34), and completes the work of salvation which his Father gave him to do (cf. Jn 5:36; 17:4). To see Jesus is to see his Father (cf. Jn 14:9). For this reason, Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making himself present and manifesting himself: through his words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious resurrection from the dead and finally with the sending of the Spirit of truth, he completed and perfected revelation and confirmed it with divine testimony... The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive

covenant, will never pass away, and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. *1 Tim* 6:14 and *Tit* 2:13)".¹⁰

Thus, the Encyclical *Redemptoris missio* calls the Church once again to the task of announcing the Gospel as the fullness of truth: "In this definitive Word of his revelation, God has made himself known in the fullest possible way. He has revealed to mankind who he is. This definitive self-revelation of God is the fundamental reason why the Church is missionary by her very nature. She cannot do other than proclaim the Gospel, that is, the fullness of the truth which God has enabled us to know about himself".¹¹ Only the revelation of Jesus Christ, therefore, "introduces into our history a universal and ultimate truth which stirs the human mind to ceaseless effort".¹²

6. Therefore, the theory of the limited, incomplete, or imperfect character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, which would be complementary to that found in other religions, is contrary to the Church's faith. Such a position would claim to be based on the notion that the truth about God cannot be grasped and manifested in its globality and completeness by any historical religion, neither by Christianity nor by Jesus Christ.

Such a position is in radical contradiction with the foregoing statements of Catholic faith according to which the full and complete revelation of the salvific mystery of God is given in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the words, deeds, and entire historical event of Jesus, though limited as human realities, have nevertheless the divine Person of the Incarnate Word, "true God and true man"¹³ as their

subject. For this reason, they possess in themselves the definitiveness and completeness of the revelation of God's salvific ways, even if the depth of the divine mystery in itself remains transcendent and inexhaustible. The truth about God is not abolished or reduced because it is spoken in human language; rather, it is unique, full, and complete, because he who speaks and acts is the Incarnate Son of God. Thus, faith requires us to profess that the Word made flesh, in his entire mystery, who moves from incarnation to glorification, is the source, participated but real, as well as the fulfilment of every salvific revelation of God to humanity,¹⁴ and that the Holy Spirit, who is Christ's Spirit, will teach this "entire truth" (Jn 16:13) to the Apostles and, through them, to the whole Church.

7. The proper response to God's revelation is "*the obedience of faith* (Rom 16:26; cf. Rom 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) by which man freely entrusts his entire self to God, offering 'the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals' and freely assenting to the revelation given by him".¹⁵ Faith is a gift of grace: "in order to have faith, the grace of God must come first and give assistance; there must also be the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and gives 'to everyone joy and ease in assenting to and believing in the truth'".¹⁶

The obedience of faith implies acceptance of the truth of Christ's revelation, guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself.¹⁷ "Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*".¹⁸ Faith, therefore, as "*a gift of God*"

and as “a supernatural virtue infused by him”,¹⁹ involves a dual adherence: to God who reveals and to the truth which he reveals, out of the trust which one has in him who speaks. Thus, “we must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”.²⁰

For this reason, the distinction between *theological faith* and *belief* in the other religions, must be *firmly held*. If faith is the acceptance in grace of revealed truth, which “makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently”,²¹ then belief, in the other religions, is that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute.²²

This distinction is not always borne in mind in current theological reflection. Thus, theological faith (the acceptance of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God) is often identified with belief in other religions, which is religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself. This is one of the reasons why the differences between Christianity and the other religions tend to be reduced at times to the point of disappearance.

8. The hypothesis of the inspired value of the sacred writings of other religions is also put forward. Certainly, it must be recognized that there are some elements in these texts which may be *de facto* instruments by which countless people throughout the centuries have been and still are able today to nourish and maintain their life-relationship with God. Thus, as noted above, the Second

Vatican Council, in considering the customs, precepts, and teachings of the other religions, teaches that “although differing in many ways from her own teaching, these nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men”.²³

The Church’s tradition, however, reserves the designation of *inspired texts* to the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, since these are inspired by the Holy Spirit.²⁴ Taking up this tradition, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council states: “For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Jn* 20:31; *2 Tim* 3:16; *2 Pet* 1:19-21; 3:15-16), they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself”.²⁵ These books “firmly, faithfully, and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures”.²⁶

Nevertheless, God, who desires to call all peoples to himself in Christ and to communicate to them the fullness of his revelation and love, “does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals, but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression even when they contain ‘gaps, insufficiencies and errors’”.²⁷ Therefore, the sacred books of other religions, which in actual fact direct and nourish the existence of their followers, receive from the mystery of Christ the elements of goodness and grace which they contain.

II. THE INCARNATE LOGOS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WORK OF SALVATION

9. In contemporary theological reflection there often emerges an approach to Jesus of Nazareth that considers him a particular, finite, historical figure, who reveals the divine not in an exclusive way, but in a way complementary with other revelatory and salvific figures. The Infinite, the Absolute, the Ultimate Mystery of God would thus manifest itself to humanity in many ways and in many historical figures: Jesus of Nazareth would be one of these. More concretely, for some, Jesus would be one of the many faces which the Logos has assumed in the course of time to communicate with humanity in a salvific way.

Furthermore, to justify the universality of Christian salvation as well as the fact of religious pluralism, it has been proposed that there is an economy of the eternal Word that is valid also outside the Church and is unrelated to her, in addition to an economy of the incarnate Word. The first would have a greater universal value than the second, which is limited to Christians, though God's presence would be more full in the second.

10. These theses are in profound conflict with the Christian faith. The doctrine of faith must be *firmly believed* which proclaims that Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, and he alone, is the Son and the Word of the Father. The Word, which "was in the beginning with God" (*Jn* 1:2) is the same as he who "became flesh" (*Jn* 1:14). In Jesus, "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*Mt* 16:16), "the whole fullness of divinity dwells in bodily form" (*Col* 2:9). He is the "only begotten Son of the Father, who is in the bosom of the Father" (*Jn* 1:18), his "beloved Son, in

whom we have redemption... In him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him, God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself, on earth and in the heavens, making peace by the blood of his Cross" (*Col* 1:13-14; 19-20).

Faithful to Sacred Scripture and refuting erroneous and reductive interpretations, the First Council of Nicaea solemnly defined its faith in: "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten generated from the Father, that is, from the being of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father, through whom all things were made, those in heaven and those on earth. For us men and for our salvation, he came down and became incarnate, was made man, suffered, and rose again on the third day. He ascended to the heavens and shall come again to judge the living and the dead".²⁸ Following the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, the Council of Chalcedon also professed: "the one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man..., one in being with the Father according to the divinity and one in being with us according to the humanity..., begotten of the Father before the ages according to the divinity and, in these last days, for us and our salvation, of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, according to the humanity".²⁹

For this reason, the Second Vatican Council states that Christ "the new Adam... 'image of the invisible God' (*Col* 1:15) is himself the perfect man who has restored that likeness to God in the children of Adam which had been disfigured since the first sin... As an innocent lamb he merited life for us by his

blood which he freely shed. In him God reconciled us to himself and to one another, freeing us from the bondage of the devil and of sin, so that each one of us could say with the apostle: the Son of God 'loved me and gave himself up for me' (*Gal 2:20*)".³⁰

In this regard, John Paul II has explicitly declared: "To introduce any sort of separation between the Word and Jesus Christ is contrary to the Christian faith... Jesus is the Incarnate Word — a single and indivisible person... Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth; he is the Word of God made man for the salvation of all... In the process of discovering and appreciating the manifold gifts — especially the spiritual treasures — that God has bestowed on every people, we cannot separate those gifts from Jesus Christ, who is at the centre of God's plan of salvation".³¹

It is likewise contrary to the Catholic faith to introduce a separation between the salvific action of the Word as such and that of the Word made man. With the incarnation, all the salvific actions of the Word of God are always done in unity with the human nature that he has assumed for the salvation of all people. The one subject which operates in the two natures, human and divine, is the single person of the Word.³²

Therefore, the theory which would attribute, after the incarnation as well, a salvific activity to the Logos as such in his divinity, exercised "in addition to" or "beyond" the humanity of Christ, is not compatible with the Catholic faith.³³

11. Similarly, the doctrine of faith regarding the unicity of the salvific economy willed by the One and Triune God must be *firmly believed*, at the source and centre of which is the mystery of the incarnation of the Word, mediator of divine grace on the level of creation and redemption (cf. *Col* 1:15-20), he who recapitulates all things (cf. *Eph* 1:10), he “whom God has made our wisdom, our righteousness, and sanctification and redemption” (*1 Cor* 1:30). In fact, the mystery of Christ has its own intrinsic unity, which extends from the eternal choice in God to the parousia: “he [the Father] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love” (*Eph* 1:4); “In Christ we are heirs, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will” (*Eph* 1:11); “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers; those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (*Rom* 8:29-30).

The Church's Magisterium, faithful to divine revelation, reasserts that Jesus Christ is the mediator and the universal redeemer: “The Word of God, through whom all things were made, was made flesh, so that as perfect man he could save all men and sum up all things in himself. The Lord...is he whom the Father raised from the dead, exalted and placed at his right hand, constituting him judge of the living and the dead”.³⁴ This salvific mediation implies also the unicity of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, eternal high priest (cf. *Heb* 6:20; 9:11; 10:12-14).

12. There are also those who propose the hypothesis of an economy of the Holy Spirit with a more universal breadth than that of the Incarnate Word, crucified and risen. This position also is contrary to the Catholic faith, which, on the contrary, considers the salvific incarnation of the Word as a trinitarian event. In the New Testament, the mystery of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, constitutes the place of the Holy Spirit's presence as well as the principle of the Spirit's effusion on humanity, not only in messianic times (cf. *Acts* 2:32-36; *Jn* 7:39, 20:22; *1 Cor* 15:45), but also prior to his coming in history (cf. *1 Cor* 10:4; *1 Pet* 1:10-12).

The Second Vatican Council has recalled to the consciousness of the Church's faith this fundamental truth. In presenting the Father's salvific plan for all humanity, the Council closely links the mystery of Christ from its very beginnings with that of the Spirit.³⁵ The entire work of building the Church by Jesus Christ the Head, in the course of the centuries, is seen as an action which he does in communion with his Spirit.³⁶

Furthermore, the salvific action of Jesus Christ, with and through his Spirit, extends beyond the visible boundaries of the Church to all humanity. Speaking of the paschal mystery, in which Christ even now associates the believer to himself in a living manner in the Spirit and gives him the hope of resurrection, the Council states: "All this holds true not only for Christians but also for all men of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery".³⁷

Hence, the connection is clear between the salvific mystery of the Incarnate Word and that of the Spirit, who actualizes the salvific efficacy of the Son made man in the lives of all people, called by God to a single goal, both those who historically preceded the Word made man, and those who live after his coming in history: the Spirit of the Father, bestowed abundantly by the Son, is the animator of all (cf. *Jn* 3:34).

Thus, the recent Magisterium of the Church has firmly and clearly recalled the truth of a single divine economy: "The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions... The Risen Christ 'is now at work in human hearts through the strength of his Spirit'... Again, it is the Spirit who sows the 'seeds of the word' present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity in Christ".³⁸ While recognizing the historical-salvific function of the Spirit in the whole universe and in the entire history of humanity,³⁹ the Magisterium states: "This is the same Spirit who was at work in the incarnation and in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and who is at work in the Church. He is therefore not an alternative to Christ nor does he fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos. Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions, serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit 'so that as perfectly human he would save all human beings and sum up all things'".⁴⁰

In conclusion, the action of the Spirit is not outside or parallel to the action of Christ. There is only one salvific economy of the One and Triune God, realized in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, actualized with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, and extended in its salvific value to all humanity and to the entire universe: "No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit".⁴¹

III. UNICITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE SALVIFIC MYSTERY OF JESUS CHRIST

13. The thesis which denies the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ is also put forward. Such a position has no biblical foundation. In fact, the truth of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Lord and only Saviour, who through the event of his incarnation, death and resurrection has brought the history of salvation to fulfilment, and which has in him its fullness and centre, must be *firmly believed* as a constant element of the Church's faith.

The New Testament attests to this fact with clarity: "The Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn 4:14); "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). In his discourse before the Sanhedrin, Peter, in order to justify the healing of a man who was crippled from birth, which was done in the name of Jesus (cf. Acts 3:1-8), proclaims: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). St. Paul adds, moreover, that Jesus Christ

“is Lord of all”, “judge of the living and the dead”, and thus “whoever believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (*Acts* 10: 36,42,43).

Paul, addressing himself to the community of Corinth, writes: “Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth — as in fact there are many gods and many lords — yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (*1 Cor* 8:5-6). Furthermore, John the Apostle states: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (*Jn* 3:16-17). In the New Testament, the universal salvific will of God is closely connected to the sole mediation of Christ: “[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (*1 Tim* 2:4-6).

It was in the awareness of the one universal gift of salvation offered by the Father through Jesus Christ in the Spirit (cf. *Eph* 1:3-14), that the first Christians encountered the Jewish people, showing them the fulfilment of salvation that went beyond the Law and, in the same awareness, they confronted the pagan world of their time, which aspired to salvation through a plurality of saviours. This inheritance of faith has been recalled recently by the Church’s Magisterium: “The Church believes that Christ, who died and was raised for the sake of all (cf. *2 Cor* 5:15) can, through his Spirit, give man the light and the strength to be able

to respond to his highest calling, nor is there any other name under heaven given among men by which they can be saved (cf. *Acts* 4:12). The Church likewise believes that the key, the centre, and the purpose of the whole of man's history is to be found in its Lord and Master".⁴²

14. It must therefore be *firmly believed* as a truth of Catholic faith that the universal salvific will of the One and Triune God is offered and accomplished once for all in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God.

Bearing in mind this article of faith, theology today, in its reflection on the existence of other religious experiences and on their meaning in God's salvific plan, is invited to explore if and in what way the historical figures and positive elements of these religions may fall within the divine plan of salvation. In this undertaking, theological research has a vast field of work under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium. The Second Vatican Council, in fact, has stated that: "the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude, but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a participation in this one source".⁴³ The content of this participated mediation should be explored more deeply, but must remain always consistent with the principle of Christ's unique mediation: "Although participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value *only* from Christ's own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his".⁴⁴ Hence, those solutions that propose a salvific action of God beyond the unique mediation of Christ would be contrary to Christian and Catholic faith.

15. Not infrequently it is proposed that theology should avoid the use of terms like “unicity”, “universality”, and “absoluteness”, which give the impression of excessive emphasis on the significance and value of the salvific event of Jesus Christ in relation to other religions. In reality, however, such language is simply being faithful to revelation, since it represents a development of the sources of the faith themselves. From the beginning, the community of believers has recognized in Jesus a salvific value such that he alone, as Son of God made man, crucified and risen, by the mission received from the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit, bestows revelation (cf. *Mt* 11:27) and divine life (cf. *Jn* 1:12; 5:25-26; 17:2) to all humanity and to every person.

In this sense, one can and must say that Jesus Christ has a significance and a value for the human race and its history, which are unique and singular, proper to him alone, exclusive, universal, and absolute. Jesus is, in fact, the Word of God made man for the salvation of all. In expressing this consciousness of faith, the Second Vatican Council teaches: “The Word of God, through whom all things were made, was made flesh, so that as perfect man he could save all men and sum up all things in himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the centre of mankind, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfilment of all aspirations. It is he whom the Father raised from the dead, exalted and placed at his right hand, constituting him judge of the living and the dead”.⁴⁵ “It is precisely this uniqueness of Christ which gives him an absolute and universal significance whereby, while belonging to history, he remains history’s centre and goal: ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end’ (*Rev* 22:13)”.⁴⁶

IV. UNICITY AND UNITY OF THE CHURCH

16. The Lord Jesus, the only Saviour, did not only establish a simple community of disciples, but constituted the Church as a *salvific mystery*: he himself is in the Church and the Church is in him (cf. *Jn* 15:1ff.; *Gal* 3:28; *Eph* 4:15-16; *Acts* 9:5). Therefore, the fullness of Christ's salvific mystery belongs also to the Church, inseparably united to her Lord. Indeed, Jesus Christ continues his presence and his work of salvation in the Church and by means of the Church (cf. *Col* 1:24-27),⁴⁷ which is his body (cf. *1 Cor* 12:12-13, 27; *Col* 1:18).⁴⁸ And thus, just as the head and members of a living body, though not identical, are inseparable, so too Christ and the Church can neither be confused nor separated, and constitute a single "whole Christ".⁴⁹ This same inseparability is also expressed in the New Testament by the analogy of the Church as the *Bride* of Christ (cf. *2 Cor* 11:2; *Eph* 5:25-29; *Rev* 21:2,9).⁵⁰

Therefore, in connection with the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus Christ, the unicity of the Church founded by him must be *firmly believed* as a truth of Catholic faith. Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: "a single Catholic and apostolic Church".⁵¹ Furthermore, the promises of the Lord that he would not abandon his Church (cf. *Mt* 16:18; 28:20) and that he would guide her by his Spirit (cf. *Jn* 16:13) mean, according to Catholic faith, that the unicity and the unity of the Church — like everything that belongs to the Church's integrity — will never be lacking.⁵²

The Catholic faithful *are required to profess* that there is an historical continuity — rooted in the apostolic succession⁵³ — between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church: “This is the single Church of Christ... which our Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter’s pastoral care (cf. *Jn* 21:17), commissioning him and the other Apostles to extend and rule her (cf. *Mt* 28:18ff.), erected for all ages as ‘the pillar and mainstay of the truth’ (*1 Tim* 3:15). This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in [*subsistit in*] the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him”.⁵⁴ With the expression *subsistit in*, the Second Vatican Council sought to harmonize two doctrinal statements: on the one hand, that the Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that “outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth”,⁵⁵ that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church.⁵⁶ But with respect to these, it needs to be stated that “they derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church”.⁵⁷

17. Therefore, there exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.⁵⁸ The Churches which, while not existing in perfect communion with the Catholic Church, remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, are true particular Churches.⁵⁹ Therefore, the Church of Christ is present and operative

also in these Churches, even though they lack full communion with the Catholic Church, since they do not accept the Catholic doctrine of the Primacy, which, according to the will of God, the Bishop of Rome objectively has and exercises over the entire Church.⁶⁰

On the other hand, the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery,⁶¹ are not Churches in the proper sense; however, those who are baptized in these communities are, by Baptism, incorporated in Christ and thus are in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Church.⁶² Baptism in fact tends per se toward the full development of life in Christ, through the integral profession of faith, the Eucharist, and full communion in the Church.⁶³

“The Christian faithful are therefore not permitted to imagine that the Church of Christ is nothing more than a collection — divided, yet in some way one — of Churches and ecclesial communities; nor are they free to hold that today the Church of Christ nowhere really exists, and must be considered only as a goal which all Churches and ecclesial communities must strive to reach”.⁶⁴ In fact, “the elements of this already-given Church exist, joined together in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without this fullness, in the other communities”.⁶⁵ “Therefore, these separated Churches and communities as such, though we believe they suffer from defects, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their

efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church".⁶⁶

The lack of unity among Christians is certainly a *wound* for the Church; not in the sense that she is deprived of her unity, but "in that it hinders the complete fulfilment of her universality in history".⁶⁷

V. THE CHURCH: KINGDOM OF GOD AND KINGDOM OF CHRIST

18. The mission of the Church is "to proclaim and establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom".⁶⁸ On the one hand, the Church is "a sacrament — that is, sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of unity of the entire human race".⁶⁹ She is therefore the sign and instrument of the kingdom; she is called to announce and to establish the kingdom. On the other hand, the Church is the "people gathered by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit",⁷⁰ she is therefore "the kingdom of Christ already present in mystery"⁷¹ and constitutes its *seed* and *beginning*. The kingdom of God, in fact, has an eschatological dimension: it is a reality present in time, but its full realization will arrive only with the completion or fulfilment of history.⁷²

The meaning of the expressions *kingdom of heaven*, *kingdom of God*, and *kingdom of Christ* in Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church, as well as in the documents of the Magisterium, is not always exactly the same, nor is their relationship to the Church, which is a mystery that cannot be totally contained by a human concept. Therefore, there can be various theological explanations of

these terms. However, none of these possible explanations can deny or empty in any way the intimate connection between Christ, the kingdom, and the Church. In fact, the kingdom of God which we know from revelation, "cannot be detached either from Christ or from the Church... If the kingdom is separated from Jesus, it is no longer the kingdom of God which he revealed. The result is a distortion of the meaning of the kingdom, which runs the risk of being transformed into a purely human or ideological goal and a distortion of the identity of Christ, who no longer appears as the Lord to whom everything must one day be subjected (cf. 1 Cor 15:27). Likewise, one may not separate the kingdom from the Church. It is true that the Church is not an end unto herself, since she is ordered toward the kingdom of God, of which she is the seed, sign and instrument. Yet, while remaining distinct from Christ and the kingdom, the Church is indissolubly united to both".⁷³

19. To state the inseparable relationship between Christ and the kingdom is not to overlook the fact that the kingdom of God — even if considered in its historical phase — is not identified with the Church in her visible and social reality. In fact, "the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church's visible boundaries" must not be excluded.⁷⁴ Therefore, one must also bear in mind that "the kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society and the world. Working for the kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God's activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God's plan of salvation in all its fullness".⁷⁵

In considering the relationship between the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, it is necessary to avoid one-sided accentuations, as is the case with those “conceptions which deliberately emphasize the kingdom and which describe themselves as ‘kingdom centred.’ They stress the image of a Church which is not concerned about herself, but which is totally concerned with bearing witness to and serving the kingdom. It is a ‘Church for others,’ just as Christ is the ‘man for others’... Together with positive aspects, these conceptions often reveal negative aspects as well. First, they are silent about Christ: the kingdom of which they speak is ‘theocentrically’ based, since, according to them, Christ cannot be understood by those who lack Christian faith, whereas different peoples, cultures, and religions are capable of finding common ground in the one divine reality, by whatever name it is called. For the same reason, they put great stress on the mystery of creation, which is reflected in the diversity of cultures and beliefs, but they keep silent about the mystery of redemption. Furthermore, the kingdom, as they understand it, ends up either leaving very little room for the Church or undervaluing the Church in reaction to a presumed ‘ecclesiocentrism’ of the past and because they consider the Church herself only a sign, for that matter a sign not without ambiguity”.⁷⁶ These theses are contrary to Catholic faith because they deny the unicity of the relationship which Christ and the Church have with the kingdom of God.

VI. THE CHURCH AND THE OTHER RELIGIONS IN RELATION TO SALVATION

20. From what has been stated above, some points follow that are necessary for theological reflection as it explores the relationship of the Church and the other religions to salvation.

Above all else, it must be *firmly believed* that “the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. *Mk* 16:16; *Jn* 3:5), and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through baptism as through a door”.⁷⁷ This doctrine must not be set against the universal salvific will of God (cf. *1 Tim* 2:4); “it is necessary to keep these two truths together, namely, the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all mankind and the necessity of the Church for this salvation”.⁷⁸

The Church is the “universal sacrament of salvation”,⁷⁹ since, united always in a mysterious way to the Saviour Jesus Christ, her Head, and subordinated to him, she has, in God's plan, an indispensable relationship with the salvation of every human being.⁸⁰ For those who are not formally and visibly members of the Church, “salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church, but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit”,⁸¹ it has a relationship with the

Church, which “according to the plan of the Father, has her origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit”.⁸²

21. With respect to the way in which the salvific grace of God — which is always given by means of Christ in the Spirit and has a mysterious relationship to the Church — comes to individual non-Christians, the Second Vatican Council limited itself to the statement that God bestows it “in ways known to himself”.⁸³ Theologians are seeking to understand this question more fully. Their work is to be encouraged, since it is certainly useful for understanding better God’s salvific plan and the ways in which it is accomplished. However, from what has been stated above about the mediation of Jesus Christ and the “unique and special relationship”⁸⁴ which the Church has with the kingdom of God among men — which in substance is the universal kingdom of Christ the Saviour — it is clear that it would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as *one way* of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the Church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the Church toward the eschatological kingdom of God.

Certainly, the various religious traditions contain and offer religious elements which come from God,⁸⁵ and which are part of what “the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and religions”.⁸⁶ Indeed, some prayers and rituals of the other religions may assume a role of preparation for the Gospel, in that they are occasions or pedagogical helps in which the human heart is prompted to be open to the action of God.⁸⁷ One cannot attribute

to these, however, a divine origin or an *ex opere operato* salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments.⁸⁸ Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that other rituals, insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors (cf. 1 Cor 10:20-21), constitute an obstacle to salvation.⁸⁹

22. With the coming of the Saviour Jesus Christ, God has willed that the Church founded by him be the instrument for the salvation of *all* humanity (cf. Acts 17:30-31).⁹⁰ This truth of faith does not lessen the sincere respect which the Church has for the religions of the world, but at the same time, it rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifferentism “characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that ‘one religion is as good as another’”.⁹¹ If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.⁹² However, “all the children of the Church should nevertheless remember that their exalted condition results, not from their own merits, but from the grace of Christ. If they fail to respond in thought, word, and deed to that grace, not only shall they not be saved, but they shall be more severely judged”.⁹³ One understands then that, following the Lord’s command (cf. Mt 28:19-20) and as a requirement of her love for all people, the Church “proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life”.⁹⁴

In inter-religious dialogue as well, the mission *ad gentes* “today as always retains its full force and necessity”.⁹⁵ “Indeed, God ‘desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Tim 2:4); that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the promptings of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God’s universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary”.⁹⁶ Inter-religious dialogue, therefore, as part of her evangelizing mission, is just one of the actions of the Church in her mission *ad gentes*.⁹⁷ *Equality*, which is a presupposition of inter-religious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ — who is God himself made man — in relation to the founders of the other religions. Indeed, the Church, guided by charity and respect for freedom,⁹⁸ must be primarily committed to proclaiming to all people the truth definitively revealed by the Lord, and to announcing the necessity of conversion to Jesus Christ and of adherence to the Church through Baptism and the other sacraments, in order to participate fully in communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, the certainty of the universal salvific will of God does not diminish, but rather increases the duty and urgency of the proclamation of salvation and of conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

23. The intention of the present *Declaration*, in reiterating and clarifying certain truths of the faith, has been to follow the example of the Apostle Paul, who wrote

to the faithful of Corinth: "I handed on to you as of first importance what I myself received" (1 Cor 15:3). Faced with certain problematic and even erroneous propositions, theological reflection is called to reconfirm the Church's faith and to give reasons for her hope in a way that is convincing and effective.

In treating the question of the true religion, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught: "We believe that this one true religion continues to exist in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus entrusted the task of spreading it among all people. Thus, he said to the Apostles: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Mt 28: 19-20). Especially in those things that concern God and his Church, all persons are required to seek the truth, and when they come to know it, to embrace it and hold fast to it".⁹⁹

The revelation of Christ will continue to be "the true lodestar"¹⁰⁰ in history for all humanity: "The truth, which is Christ, imposes itself as an all-embracing authority".¹⁰¹ The Christian mystery, in fact, overcomes all barriers of time and space, and accomplishes the unity of the human family: "From their different locations and traditions all are called in Christ to share in the unity of the family of God's children... Jesus destroys the walls of division and creates unity in a new and unsurpassed way through our sharing in his mystery. This unity is so deep that the Church can say with Saint Paul: 'You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are saints and members of the household of God' (Eph 2:19)".¹⁰²

The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, at the Audience of June 16, 2000, granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with sure knowledge and by his apostolic authority, ratified and confirmed this Declaration, adopted in Plenary Session and ordered its publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, August 6, 2000, the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord.

JOSEPH Card. RATZINGER

Prefect

TARCISIO BERTONE, S.D.B.

Archbishop Emeritus of Vercelli

Secretary

(1) FIRST COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Symbolum Constantinopolitanum*: DS 150.

(2) Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 1: AAS 83 (1991), 249-340.

(3) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad gentes* and Declaration *Nostra aetate*; cf. also PAUL VI Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*: AAS 68 (1976), 5-76; JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*.

(4) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration *Nostra aetate*, 2.

(5) PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE and THE CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, Instruction *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 29:

AAS 84 (1992), 424; cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

(6) Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55: AAS 83 (1991), 302-304.

(7) Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE and THE CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, Instruction *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 9: AAS 84 (1992), 417ff.

(8) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 5: AAS 91 (1999), 5-88.

(9) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei verbum*, 2.

(10) *Ibid.*, 4.

(11) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 5.

(12) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 14.

(13) COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON, *Symbolum Chalcedonense*: DS 301; cf. ST. ATHANASIUS, *De Incarnatione*, 54, 3: SC 199, 458.

(14) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei verbum*, 4.

(15) *Ibid.*, 5.

(16) *Ibid.*

(17) Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 144.

(18) *Ibid.*, 150.

(19) *Ibid.*, 153.

(20) *Ibid.*, 178.

(21) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 13.

(22) Cf. *ibid.*, 31-32.

(23) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration *Nostra aetate*, 2; cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad gentes*, 9, where it speaks of the elements of good present

“in the particular customs and cultures of peoples”; Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 16, where it mentions the elements of good and of truth present among non-Christians, which can be considered a preparation for the reception of the Gospel.

(24) Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decretum de libris sacris et de traditionibus recipiendis*: DS 1501; FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, cap. 2: DS 3006.

(25) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei verbum*, 11.

(26) *Ibid.*

(27) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55; cf. 56 and PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 53.

(28) FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA, *Symbolum Nicaenum*: DS 125.

(29) COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON, *Symbolum Chalcedonense*: DS 301.

(30) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

(31) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 6.

(32) Cf. ST. LEO THE GREAT, *Tomus ad Flavianum*: DS 294.

(33) Cf. ST. LEO THE GREAT, Letter to the Emperor Leo I *Promississe me memini*: DS 318: “...in tantam unitatem ab ipso conceptu Virginis deitate et humanitate conserta, ut nec sine homine divina, nec sine Deo agerentur humana”. Cf. also *ibid.* DS 317.

(34) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 45; cf. also COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decretum de peccato originali*, 3: DS 1513.

(35) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 3-4.

(36) Cf. *ibid.*, 7; cf. ST. IRENAEUS, who wrote that it is in the Church “that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit” (*Adversus haereses* III, 24, 1: SC 211, 472).

(37) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

(38) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 28. For the “seeds of the Word” cf. also St. JUSTIN MARTYR, *Second Apology* 8, 1-2; 10, 1-3; 13, 3-6: ed. E.J. Goodspeed, 84; 85; 88-89.

(39) Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris missio*, 28-29.

(40) *Ibid.*, 29.

(41) *Ibid.*, 5.

(42) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 10. Cf. St. Augustine, who wrote that Christ is the way, which “has never been lacking to mankind... and apart from this way no one has been set free, no one is being set free, no one will be set free” *De civitate Dei* 10, 32, 2: CCSL 47, 312.

(43) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 62.

(44) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 5.

(45) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 45. The necessary and absolute singularity of Christ in human history is well expressed by St. Irenaeus in contemplating the preeminence of Jesus as firstborn Son: “In the heavens, as firstborn of the Father’s counsel, the perfect Word governs and legislates all things; on the earth, as firstborn of the Virgin, a man just and holy, reverencing God and pleasing to God, good and perfect in every way, he saves from hell all those who follow him since he is the firstborn from the dead and Author of the life of God” (*Demonstratio apostolica*, 39: SC 406, 138).

(46) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 6.

(47) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 14.

(48) Cf. *ibid.*, 7.

(49) Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *Enarratio in Psalmos*, Ps. 90, *Sermo* 2,1: CCSL 39, 1266; ST. GREGORY THE GREAT, *Moralia in Iob*, Praefatio, 6, 14: PL 75, 525; ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 48, a. 2 ad 1.

(50) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 6.

(51) *Symbolum maius Ecclesiae Armeniacae*: DS 48. Cf. BONIFACE VIII, *Unam sanctam*: DS 870-872; SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 8.

(52) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 4; JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, 11: AAS 87 (1995), 927.

(53) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 20; cf. also ST. IRENAEUS, *Adversus haereses*, III, 3, 1-3: SC 211, 20-44; ST. CYPRIAN, *Epist.* 33, 1: CCSL 3B, 164-165; ST. AUGUSTINE, *Contra adver. legis et prophet.*, 1, 20, 39: CCSL 49, 70.

(54) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 8.

(55) *Ibid.*; cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, 13. Cf. also SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 15 and the Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.

(56) The interpretation of those who would derive from the formula *subsistit in* the thesis that the one Church of Christ could subsist also in non-Catholic Churches and ecclesial communities is therefore contrary to the authentic meaning of *Lumen gentium*. "The Council instead chose the word *subsistit* precisely to clarify that there exists only one 'subsistence' of the true Church, while outside her visible structure there only exist *elementa Ecclesiae*, which —

being elements of that same Church — tend and lead toward the Catholic Church” (CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Notification on the Book “Church: Charism and Power” by Father Leonardo Boff*. AAS 77 [1985], 756-762).

(57) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.

(58) Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, 1: AAS 65 (1973), 396-398.

(59) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 14 and 15; CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter *Communione notio*, 17: AAS 85 (1993), 848.

(60) Cf. FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL, Constitution *Pastor aeternus*: DS 3053-3064; SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 22.

(61) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 22.

(62) Cf. *ibid.*, 3.

(63) Cf. *ibid.*, 22.

(64) CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, 1.

(65) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, 14.

(66) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.

(67) CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter *Communione notio*, 17; cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 4.

(68) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 5.

(69) *Ibid.*, 1.

(70) *Ibid.*, 4. Cf. ST. CYPRIAN, *De Dominica oratione* 23: CCSL 3A, 105.

(71) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 3.

(72) Cf. *ibid.*, 9; cf. also the prayer addressed to God found in the *Didache* 9,4: SC 248, 176: "May the Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom" and *ibid.* 10, 5: SC 248, 180: "Remember, Lord, your Church... and, made holy, gather her together from the four winds into your kingdom which you have prepared for her".

(73) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 18; cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, 17: *L'Osservatore Romano* (November 7, 1999). The kingdom is so inseparable from Christ that, in a certain sense, it is identified with him (cf. ORIGEN, *In Mt. Hom.*, 14, 7: PG 13, 1197; TERTULLIAN, *Adversus Marcionem*, IV, 33,8: CCSL 1, 634).

(74) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 18.

(75) *Ibid.*, 15.

(76) *Ibid.*, 17.

(77) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 14; cf. Decree *Ad gentes*, 7; Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.

(78) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 9; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 846-847.

(79) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 48.

(80) Cf. ST. CYPRIAN, *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*, 6: CCSL 3, 253-254; ST. IRENAEUS, *Adversus haereses*, III, 24, 1: SC 211, 472-474.

(81) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 10.

(82) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad gentes*, 2. The famous formula *extra Ecclesiam nullus omnino salvatur* is to be interpreted in this sense (cf. FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL, Cap. 1. *De fide catholica*: DS 802). Cf. also the *Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston*: DS 3866-3872.

- (83) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad gentes*, 7.
- (84) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 18.
- (85) These are the seeds of the divine Word (*semina Verbi*), which the Church recognizes with joy and respect (cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Ad gentes*, 11; Declaration *Nostra aetate*, 2).
- (86) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 29.
- (87) Cf. *ibid.*; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 843.
- (88) Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Decretum de sacramentis*, can. 8, *de sacramentis in genere*: DS 1608.
- (89) Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55.
- (90) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 17; JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 11.
- (91) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 36.
- (92) Cf. PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici corporis*: DS 3821.
- (93) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 14.
- (94) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration *Nostra aetate*, 2.
- (95) SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad gentes*, 7.
- (96) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 851; cf. also 849-856.
- (97) Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55; Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, 31.
- (98) Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Declaration *Dignitatis humanae*, 1.
- (99) *Ibid.*
- (100) JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 15.
- (101) *Ibid.*, 92.
- (102) *Ibid.*, 70.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Bibliography is *select* because the full corpus of Men's works is beyond the scope of this thesis. In the present Bibliography, the dates that follow the titles of the Catholic Church documents refer to the promulgation of the respective documents, not to their publication. The publication details for separate documents are not presented, because they are available in officially approved English translations either in a variety of publications or in the Internet (see, for example, the Vatican page at www.vatican.va). The structure of the Select Bibliography is as follows:

1. Primary Sources

- a. *Works of Aleksandr Men' on Religions of the World*
- b. *Catholic Church Documents on Religions of the World*
- c. *Bible Editions*

2. Secondary Sources

- a. *Secondary Sources Related to Aleksandr Men'*
 - Books
 - Articles
 - Letters
- b. *Other Documents of the Catholic Church*
- c. *Theology and Religious Studies*
 - Books
 - Articles
- d. *Internet Resources*
- e. *Other Secondary Sources*

1. Primary Sources

- a. *Works of Aleksandr Men' on Religions of the World*

Note on the authorship: Fr Men' was using several pseudonyms during the Soviet times to conceal his authorship from the Communist regime. The pseudonyms are: Эммануил СВЕТЛОВ [Emmanuil SVETLOV], А. ПАВЛОВ [A. PAVLOV], and Андрей БОГОЛЮБОВ [Andrey BOGOL'YUBOV].

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